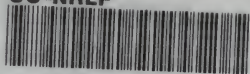


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GEORGE ELIOT

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LITERARY STUDIES

BY

JOSEPH JACOBS

*Shall we say: 'Let the ages judge the
spirits!' Why, we are the beginning
of the ages.*

GEORGE ELIOT



NEW AND ENLARGED EDITION

NEW YORK
CHARLES SCRIBNER'S SONS
1896

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TO
FREDERICK RYLAND
IN MEMORY OF OLD TIMES
AT CAMBRIDGE



PREFACE

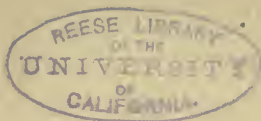
I have explained in the Introduction why I have thought it worth while to reprint these 'éloges' of four of the chief English writers who died in the last decade and to add certain reviews of books by or about them. I desire here to emphasise the fact that these obituaries were in every case written within the two or three days that elapsed between the death of their subjects and the appearance of the ensuing issue of the 'Athenæum.' I have nothing to say against the practice of others, but I cannot myself anticipate the Great Destroyer.

I have to thank the Publisher and Editor of the 'Athenæum' for their kind and ready permission to reprint these articles from its pages.

J. J.

P.S.—*To the present re-issue I have added articles on Tennyson, Stevenson, and Seeley, which appeared immediately after their death. I have to thank the Editors of the Academy and Athenæum for permission to reproduce these.*

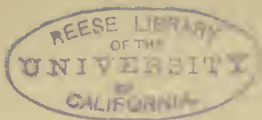




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INTRODUCTION

THE first few days after a great writer's death are critical for his reputation. Then for the first time we realise all that he has been to us, all that he has done for us. We can for the first time speak of his whole work with little fear of the surprises that genius has often in store for the critic who dares to be prophetic. We can speak out our full thought of him, if for no other reason, because what we say cannot by any chance come before him. Above all, he has ceased to be a person, and we can treat more simply and directly of his spiritual influence. At the same time we that speak are those who have come under his spell in his lifetime and express the feelings of his contemporaries without any of the disturbing influences which later revelations or the modification of the *Zeitgeist* produce on the appeal he may have for after-times. We alone can say what he has been to us whom he addressed.

It has chanced during the past ten years that I have been called upon to give on behalf of the

Athenæum an estimate of the loss English Letters have sustained by the death of the four chief writers who left us during the decade. These essays differed, I believe, in at least two respects from the obituary notices which swarm from the press on such occasions. They were estimates, not obituaries; they dealt rather with the work than with the life of each author. And they were written immediately on hearing of the death of the writer concerned, whereas it is well known that every newspaper has obituaries of all the notabilities of the time pigeon-holed for production on the morrow of the death. Whatever then the merits of these essays, they were written under the influence of the feelings I have indicated above, and were in each case, I may perhaps say, the first critical estimate of contemporary England on the lifework of these great writers. That they appeared in the foremost literary journal of the English-speaking peoples gives them an importance that I could not claim for any personal utterances. I have for these reasons thought them worthy of being put in more permanent form as documents—'documents' is a favourite word and thing just now—in the history of English opinion about the writers treated in this volume. At the same time I have thought it right to leave them in substantially the same form as that in which they first appeared, only removing a few traces of neces-

sarily hasty writing. 'Documents' must not be falsified. I may perhaps venture to add, in fairness to myself, that there are some few things in them which I would have put differently if I had been writing over my own name in the first instance.

To make this little volume more worthy of acceptance, I have added a few reviews of works written by or about the authors treated. These also appeared in the *Athenæum* for the most part after the death of the subjects of my *éloges*. They were more detailed estimates of parts of the authors' works, or they dealt more at large with their lives, or in other ways they seemed to me to supplement the more general *éloges* written for a special occasion from a special point of view.

Looking back on these memorial essays, I can now discern the general method on which they were formed, though I was not conscious of it at the time of writing. At the moment of an author's death, we think primarily of the man we have lost. But we mourn the man for the sake of his works, hence it is those of his qualities that are shown in his works which naturally engage our attention at the moment of his death. These essays are therefore appropriately devoted to the literary qualities of their subjects' minds. They are of the psychological, not of the æsthetic order of criticism.

'There are,' to quote myself elsewhere, 'two methods of studying literary productions, which

‘ may be roughly described as the æsthetic and
‘ the psychological. The former goes straight to
‘ the literary products themselves, and seeks to
‘ determine their aptitude for exerting the specific
‘ literary emotions often reflecting the critic’s own
‘ feelings in the rhythm and beauty of his language.
‘ This is the method of Lamb and Mr. Swinburne,
‘ and (in his best moments) Mr. Matthew Arnold.
‘ The other or psychological method looks rather
‘ to the literary producer, and endeavours to ascer-
‘ tain those qualities of the author’s mind that
‘ would produce such and such results. Mr. Leslie
‘ Stephen pursued this method during his *Hours*
‘ *in a Library*, and Mr. Morley and Mr. Hutton
‘ afford other instances of its use.’ I need scarcely
say to which of these two methods the present
essays belong. By natural bent, by training—I
have some claims to be an expert in psychology—I
belong to the psychological school. To be of the
æsthetic school is only given to those who are
something more than critics. They are the artists
in criticism; *nous autres* must be content with
being scientific, though even we may attempt to
give such artistic form to our work as science
allows. Each school has its province. I have
tried to show above that the psychological method
has a fit application at moments when we are
thinking of the literary qualities of an author’s
mind rather than the literary effect of his works.

In making my estimates of George Eliot, Matthew Arnold, Browning, and Newman, I have had the critical advantage, though the personal loss, of not being personally acquainted with the subjects of my essays except in one case. Of George Eliot I may say at least *vidi tantum*. I can still recall the feelings of ardent reverence with which I approached the Priory, North Bank, one Sunday afternoon in 1877. I had written an enthusiastic—I fear I must add gushing—defence of *Daniel Deronda*, from a Jewish point of view, in the June number of *Macmillan's Magazine* of that year, and George Henry Lewes had expressed a wish that I should call upon them. I went with all the feelings of the neophyte at the shrine for the first time. Need I say that I was disappointed? Authors give of their best in their works under the consciousness of addressing the whole world. We ought not to expect them to live up to that best at all times and before all onlookers: but we do.

I have few Boswellisms to offer. I remember being struck even at that early stage of my social discernment by the contrast between the boisterous Bohemian *bonhomie* of George Lewes and the almost old-maidenish refinement of his life's companion. I had tried to lead her talk to my own criticism, but was met by the quiet parry, 'I never read criticisms of my own works.' I could not help thinking at

the time '*que fais-je donc dans cette galère ?*' but she was obviously in the right. Others were present and the topics had to be general. We got upon songs for singing, and I was attempting to contend that the sweetest songs for vocal purposes were nowadays not those of the poets of the day. She pointed out that even Tennyson's in the *Princess* were unsuitable for that purpose, whereas the Elizabethans produced songs that were gems of literary art, yet trilled forth as naturally as a bird's carol.

I saw her but once more after Lewes's death. I had sent her something I had published in the *Nineteenth Century*, and she had written asking me to call. I did so, and found the house in gloom and herself in depression. On this occasion I was struck by the massiveness of the head as contrasted with the frailty of the body. When she was seated one thought her tall: such a head should have been propped up by a larger frame. The long thin sensitive hands were those of a musician. The exquisite modulations of the voice told of refinement in every well-chosen phrase. She had at least one of the qualifications one expects in an author; she did indeed 'talk like a book.' She spoke of one of her favourite themes, the appeal of the circle in which one is born even if one has in certain ways grown beyond or outside it. Before I left she asked me to find out for her the meaning

of a Hebrew inscription on a seal which an old Russian Jew had given Tourgenief: he had sent her an impression, which she intrusted to me. 'You will be careful of it,' she said, 'I prize it as coming from him.' I thought of old Kalonymos and his similar caution as he hands the key of his family archives to Daniel Deronda. We parted, and I soon returned the impression with an explanation of the inscription. She sent a few words of kindly thanks, and that was all till I received the final summons to Highgate Cemetery.

I do not think that my critical estimate of George Eliot's work was at all affected by this slight personal intercourse with her. My veneration for her work in those days may have led me to some extent, however, to that curious kind of injustice, when we guard against too high praise of those we know or like just because we know and like them. My personal estimate of her work when I wrote about it was certainly higher than my written words would imply. Judged by the result I was justified in this critical caution. In the ten years or so that have elapsed since her death, George Eliot's reputation has not risen, her influence has been on the decline. It seems worth while seeking for the causes of this.

It is of course a general law that literary reputations do decline for a time at least after an author's death. While he lives there is always the

halo and attraction of the unknown about what may still come from him : this fades away with his death. Then again his friends have no longer the same motives for keeping his reputation at the highest pitch. Friends, too, die away. London again is the fount of literary reputation, and Londoners, like all inhabitants of great cities, are always eager for some new thing. Old writers compete with the new ones, it is true, but the competition of the novelty is still more efficacious.

All these causes have co-operated to lessen George Eliot's influence and reputation. But there are other more special causes that have tended in the same direction. Mr. Cross's *Life* was a disappointment: his extreme reticence about personal details and careful excision of all humanising touches made the book dull, and the total impression of George Eliot's personality unattractive. Her last books, *Daniel Deronda*, *Theophrastus Such*, and the collected *Essays*, were a progressive series of anti-climaxes, and it is the latest works that give the final impression in more senses than one. Their didactic tone was too obvious, and the British public resents nothing more than being preached at too obviously.

But above and beyond all these reasons there has been a subtle and gradual change in the public mind which has told against George Eliot's work in two directions. There is a fashion in the art of

the novel, as in other arts, and for some time the vogue has been growing for the *conte* as against the novel, and for the romantic novel of incident as against the realistic novel of character. Amid the problems and perplexities of the present we fly for relaxation to the Something-other-than-Here-and-Now, and we like to take it short. Both tendencies tell against George Eliot. There is a general tendency nowadays against taking intellectual nourishment in anything but small doses. The enormous growth of the magazines is at once a result and a cause of this. *Tit-Bits* completes what the *Fortnightly Review* began. It is indeed an Age of Tit-bits. The strenuous attention which the works of George Eliot demand is too much for minds accustomed to such intellectual food as the magazines now supply. The high seriousness of her art displeases the frivolous, and the tone of English Letters just now is distinctly frivolous.

George Eliot aimed and claimed to be a teacher. Her works were a conscious criticism of life. They gave the new feeling about life that seemed to be rendered necessary by the triumph of Darwinism in English speculation. During the 'seventies' there was a confident feeling, among those of us who came to our intellectual majority in those years, that Darwinism was to solve all the problems. This was doubtless due to the triumphant tone in which certain eminent professors of

science—notably Professors Huxley, Tyndall, and Clifford—spoke of what science was going to do for the spiritual life when the older theological trammels had been removed. What they promised George Eliot was currently supposed to have attained, and her words were scanned for the secret message. She was to all of us what she seemed to Mr. F. W. Myers in that fine description of his interview with her in the Fellows' Garden at Trinity; she was 'a Sibyl in the gloom.' She alone, we thought, possessed the message of the New Spirit that Darwinism was to breathe into the inner life of man.

Well, Darwinism has come, and has conquered, and, as a vital influence in the spiritual life, has gone. Instead of solving all the problems, it has raised only too many fresh ones. It has thrown light on origins, or to speak more accurately, it has set us on the search for origins. But the undeveloped germ which we call origin has in it *ex hypothesi* all the problems which the developed product offers, and presents these in more concentrated form. And the something that develops is obviously different from its own development, which is all that Darwinism even professes to explain. To put it technically, origins are not essences, and it is the essence of the matter, the thing as in itself it really is, that we seek for. Hence Darwinism, which merely touches origins and

leaves essences alone, only disappoints. The pretty quarrel, too, that is going on among the experts about the fundamentals of Darwinism has helped to discredit it. And with this discredit George Eliot, the literary voice of Darwinism, suffers too. The danger which I foresaw in 1879—‘the risk of subordinating the eternal truths of art to what may be the temporary opinions of science’—has proved to be no illusory one.

Again our interests have turned from speculation, even from the bases of conduct, and are almost exclusively social. ‘We are all socialists now’—since the Redistribution Act—and George Eliot has little to say on the Condition of England Question. And what little she does say, in *Felix Holt* for example, is not much in consonance with the feeling of to-day. Her dearest memories were of a time when old Leisure was still alive and social changes took place but slowly. Felix Holt the Radical is rather Felix Holt the Conservative; he is not even a Tory-Democrat. But the ineffectiveness of her social utterances was a sign that her heart was not in the social part of her work; we have no heart for anything else.

For all these reasons then the reputation of George Eliot is undergoing a kind of eclipse in this last decade of the nineteenth century. It is becoming safe to indulge in cheap sneers at the ineffectiveness of her heroes, at the want of *élan* in

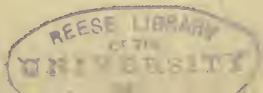
the movement of her stories, at the too obvious preachments of her rather overspun comments. Her heroes are perhaps rather apt to be muffs ; it is the way with heroes of novels generally. Her plots might develop at greater speed ; your novel of character rarely travels express. 'Here the story halts a little' might be written over many a page of Richardson and Fielding, of Miss Austen and Thackeray, but it is a part of their method and a necessary part. And the comments and discussion which cause these frequent halts, have they not a special appeal of their own, even if the appeal be somewhat alien to the art of the novel? And if George Eliot preaches, what admirable sermons she writes ! The realistic writer cannot describe the life around him or her without indicating the attitude they take towards it. That very attitude is a preachment : Zola in *L'Assommoir*, Flaubert in *Madame Bovary*, are as powerful sermons as I know.

That part then of George Eliot's work which appealed more especially to the *Zeitgeist* is ineffective now that the *Zeitgeist* has changed. But how much remains that can never lose its effectiveness because it appeals to the *ewige Geist* of humanity. Her admirable peasants and parsons, her charming children, her scenery and her interiors, her wit and her wisdom, these are surely a possession for aye in the realm of English fiction. Whatever

view we take of her art, we must recognise that she has added as many living personalities to the common acquaintance of English-speaking people as almost any other English novelist, and this after all is the final criterion. And in the difficult sphere of the aphorism, her works are more copiously studded with subtle truths aptly expressed than those of any novelist who has ever written in English. The enemy will say this has nothing to do with the novel : but the enemy can always complain of any form of art that it is not another, so we may let him sneer.

It has seemed worth while devoting some attention to the after-history of George Eliot's reputation, as so much of this volume happens already to be taken up by a consideration of George Eliot's art from various points of view, and I have here attempted to complete the survey. With the other authors considered, there is no occasion to deal in such detail, as their loss is so recent that any attempt to distinguish the permanent elements of their art would be impracticable.

I may add that I have found a difficulty in giving an appropriate name to these studies, so far as they are not reviews. 'Obituaries' of the authors they are not, for I do not profess to give any details of their lives, or even of their works. 'Necrologe' does not sound English, and besides savours of Woking. *Éloge* comes nearest, but that on the



- face of it is not English. A wicked wag among my friends suggests *Post Mortems*, but I trust I have not been quite so cruel as that would imply.

One more word and I have done. There seems something of ingratitude, almost of irreverence, in subjecting to cool criticism writers to whom one owes so much of one's best self. I need not refute the fallacy, that in presuming to criticise one assumes any superiority: if that were so, there would scarcely be any place for criticism, and certainly none at all for critics *pur sang*. The author appeals to his generation: the critic answers the appeal. In the present case the thing had to be done and I was called upon to do it. I can only say I tried to do my work as honestly and conscientiously as was in my power.

GEORGE ELIOT

December 22, 1880



GEORGE ELIOT



SEVENTEEN years ago the Christmas week was darkened by the death of Thackeray. Once again the festive season has been saddened in many a household by the knowledge that George Eliot was no more. It is not too much to say that with many her works have been far more than novels ; they have formed an animating principle co-operating with some of the most powerful spiritual influences of the time. It appears, therefore, to be an appropriate occasion to pass in critical review the works she has left behind her and to estimate their importance.

As is well known, her earlier productions were translations of German works on the metaphysics of religion. Strauss's *Life of Jesus* appeared in an English form in 1846, and Feuerbach's *Essence of Christianity* in 1853. As translations they were excellent, but it cannot be said that they have had any

influence on English speculation. Their chief interest consists in the evidence they give of George Eliot's early devotion to 'advanced' thinking and absorbing interest in the philosophy of religion.

Her importance in the history of English literature rests upon the series of fictions commenced in 1857 with the *Scenes of Clerical Life*, and concluded in 1876 by *Daniel Deronda*. It is not difficult to discern in these works two widely varying sets of artistic motives. The *Scenes*, *Adam Bede* (1859), *The Mill on the Floss*, *Silas Marner*, *Felix Holt*, and *Middlemarch* are all clearly connected by their subject-matter, and, in large measure, by their style of treatment. In them she went back to the scenes and days of her childhood. It has been often remarked that the plastic period of the literary artist, when impressions are retained with that minute observation necessary for the novel, ceases at an extremely early age. Dickens was only at home in the England of coaches and among the lower classes. George Eliot was most happy when recalling mid-England in the days before the Reform Bill. Her father was a land surveyor, and she thus came in contact with all classes of provincial society, so that her pictures are far more complete than either Dickens's or Thackeray's accounts of London

life. Both George Eliot and George Sand had learned that provincial life is more intense, if more monotonous and simple, than the busy life of towns. Amid the turmoil of cities, existence passes through a series of shallows, as it were ; whereas in the country the emotions are collected into one deep pool, which pours forth tumultuously if once disturbed. Throughout these novels of memory, as they may be termed, the incidents and tone have a tragic ring about them which is wanting in the majority of novels dealing with London life. Only in the Brontës, and perhaps in Mrs. Gaskell, do we find anything like the depth of earnestness displayed in these novels of George Eliot. Much of their piquancy depends on the contrast between the subject-matter and the manifold reflections to which it gives rise. While the subject is entirely obsolete, the reflections are in accord with the most advanced thought of the day. Every one knows something of the scenery and the characters amid which these novels are placed. The rich fields of Loamshire and their owners and cultivators in the early years of this century form the common background of these tragedies of human life. Generally speaking, they treat of the influence of adverse circumstance on the inner life of the actors.

It is essentially the spiritual life of her heroes and heroines which interests the writer. It is characteristic that she has introduced the religious life as a leading motive of the novel. Dinah Morris's spiritual experiences and exhortations, Maggie Tulliver's conversion by Thomas à Kempis, even Mr. Bulstrode's wrestlings of the spirit, are themes which only the deepest spiritual sympathy could have handled adequately. Not that she is deficient in the lighter qualities of the novelist's art. No one has described English scenery with more accurate touch or displayed a more Shakespearean sense of humour. Mrs. Poyser and Bartle Massey are unequalled creations. In the delineation of children's character she stands almost on a level with Victor Hugo. Altogether, in range of sympathy, in nobility of tone, in fertility of reflection, and in subtlety of insight these novels of memory are unique in the history of fiction. Opinion will differ as to their comparative merits, and each has its distinctive qualities. Yet it is probable that *Adam Bede* will always retain a certain supremacy; there is a freshness of tone as if the writer were luxuriating in new-found powers. The unsavoury *motif* of *Felix Holt* places it out of competition; *Silas Marner*, finished as it is, is on a smaller scale; and the concluding part

of *The Mill on the Floss* destroys the almost perfect 'artistry' of the story of Tom and Maggie Tulliver. *Middlemarch* remains, and as 'a study in provincial life' is complete; yet the deficiencies in the plot and a certain undercurrent of social protest counterbalance its other advantages, and the palm is left to George Eliot's first and probably greatest work. The subject of *Adam Bede* required extreme delicacy of treatment; but all such requirements are satisfied. The shallowness of Hetty's character removes from her that sympathy which would otherwise render her fate too sad for the imagination; but her history illustrates the lesson which all these novels were consciously made to teach. They aided the great work of Wordsworth in educating the emotions to sympathise with the fundamental joys and sorrows of human life in all social spheres. And in the fine words of Wordsworth about his own works, 'They will co-operate with the benign tendencies in nature and society, and will, in their degree, be efficacious in making men wiser, better, and happier.'

The remaining novels, *Romola*, *The Spanish Gypsy* (apart from its unfortunate form), and *Daniel Deronda*, deal with an entirely different range of interests. They are romances of the historic imagination, consciously creative in-

stead of being, as in the other novels, unconsciously reproductive. The first two dealt with the history of the past, and one cannot help thinking that *The Spanish Gypsy* would have been almost as successful a reproduction as *Romola* if it had been written in a congenial medium. In these laborious research did the work that loving memory effected in the other novels. As the artist went to work more consciously, so the motive principle of her work came more to the surface. The leading conception of modern science as applied to man, the influence of hereditary transmission, was transmuted into the moral principle of the claims of race. In the novels of memory this had been disguised under the simpler form of family love. Maggie Tulliver's action at the end of *The Mill on the Floss* is entirely based on the claims of family as opposed to personal affection for Stephen Guest. 'Love is *not* enough' is the refrain, and this comes out still more strongly on the broader historic canvas of *Romola* and *The Spanish Gypsy*. The point of Tito Melema's treachery is the absence of hereditary connection with Florentine politics. Fedalma sacrifices everything to the claims of race. In *Daniel Deronda* the difficult task was attempted of raising contemporary events to a *quasi*-historic level. By the mere force of genius George Eliot strove

to create a personality which she deliberately asserted to be on a level with the great spiritual leaders of mankind. We have reasons for saying that the identification of the Jewish prophet of *Daniel Deronda* with a philosophic Jew described by Mr. G. H. Lewes in the *Fortnightly Review* is erroneous. The Jews give the greatest example in modern times of fidelity to the claims of race, and it was natural that George Eliot should have sympathised with Jewish aspirations. In *The Spanish Gypsy* she had already portrayed a fine figure in the Jew Sephardo. In Mordecai Cohen she attempted to idealise the history of this remarkable race, and by so doing destroyed the chances of success for her most elaborate production. Want of knowledge and want of sympathy with the Jewish ideal will probably always be an effectual bar to the appreciation of *Daniel Deronda*, and the hero plays the difficult part of irradiating sympathy instead of doing noble deeds. Yet it would be rash to assert that, if the Jewish race again became prominent as a nationality, *Daniel Deronda* may not ultimately figure as one of the favourite books of the Chosen People. Even as it is, it must be recognised that the conception of such a character as the principal Jew of the book shows singular artistic daring.

While *Romola* and *Daniel Deronda* are of a different *genre* from the other novels, they have a share of their excellences of style and characterisation. Since attention was first drawn to the point, too much stress has been laid on the 'scientific technicalities' of her style of late years. She would not have been the foremost woman of her age if she had not been influenced by one of its greatest movements. Yet the evidences of this are as clear in her earliest as in her latest works. In *Janet's Repentance* we read that 'the idea of 'duty . . . is to the moral life what the 'addition of a great central ganglion is to 'animal life.' In the second page of *Adam Bede*, Seth's 'coronal arch' becomes a prominent feature in his portrait. In *The Mill on the Floss* George Eliot cannot let us know the ingenious trick by which Bob Jakin gains a couple of inches in measuring out his flannel without referring to his thumb as the 'mark of difference between the man and the monkey.' It is not quite correct to say that her style became more scientific in her last two novels; it would be more exact to say that it became more complex. As her thoughts became more subtle, her sentences naturally became more complex, and it would be difficult to determine the limits beyond which subtlety and complexity become inartistic. Allied to

this error is the statement, frequently repeated in the obituary notices of the newspapers, that George Eliot was essentially an analytic genius, and that she constructed her characters out of analytic materials. The idea immediately suggested by this curiously uncritical assertion is that the perusal of Mr. Bain's works is the best propædæutic for the creation of a character like Dolly Winthrop. It would be far more correct to say that George Eliot's genius was essentially constructive, and that her analytic comments are the results of her training and experience. Like all great moderns, George Eliot possessed the power of feeling deeply and of simultaneously intellectualising her feelings; this is the most characteristic note of the modern mind. In this regard it is interesting to notice her accuracy and completeness, which at first sight appear peculiarly scientific. Yet it is the selective accuracy of the artist, not the exhaustive exactness of the *savant*, that she displays. When Cabel Garth's eyebrows 'make their pathetic angle' we have this trait alone given, and not a paragraph from Mr. Darwin's *Expression of the Emotions*. It would perhaps be more appropriate to point to her stern adherence to the fact of human nature as answering to the accuracy and impartiality of the scientific mind. Maggie

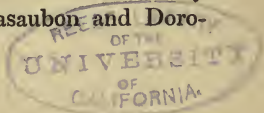
Tulliver's sudden love for a dandy like Stephen Guest may grate against Mr. Swinburne's critical feelings, but is, no doubt, true to human nature. It is this fidelity to the facts of life that gives the prominent sadness to her works. She has chosen tragic themes, and tragic events are apt to be sad. Perhaps the most dominant idea of her *Weltanschauung* is the conception of law in human character.

Our deeds still travel with us from afar,
And what we have been makes us what we are,

might stand as a motto to all her works.

It is character in process of change that engages all her interest. Hence there is less of the conventional, less of the worldly, in her work than in most great novelists. We have soul speaking to soul: Dinah to Hetty, Savonarola to Romola, Felix to Esther, Dorothea to Ladislaw, Mordecai to Deronda. When the conventional is introduced it is chiefly for humorous purposes; the humour of the immortal scene at the Rainbow Inn in *Silas Marner* consists in its archaic conventionality. Interest of character is, however, the predominant interest of George Eliot's work. Nearly one-half of *Adam Bede* is taken up by the first week of the action, during which we learn to know the chief characters. The

rest of the book hurries through nearly two years before Adam is united to Dinah. This attention to characterisation has exercised a somewhat deleterious effect on her plots; so long as we know what her characters are and have become, it does not so much matter what becomes of them. Hence the frequent resource to the *Deus ex machinâ* of sudden death; it is astonishing how many of her characters are snatched from our view in this way. Death by drowning seems to be the favourite method: Dunstan Cass, Tom and Maggie Tulliver, Tito Melema, Grandcourt, all disappear in this abrupt way. It would be unjust to pass from this aspect of her work without a word of praise to her admirable range of power, and to the marvellous ability she possessed of giving life to her minor characters. The moral earnestness of her work is another prominent 'note.' With her the novel was morality teaching by example. And the teaching was of an unusually lofty character. Renunciation of self, subordination to the social life, were the great texts. Egoism is the canker of the soul: Hetty, Tito Melema, Grandcourt, are prominent examples. Still more noteworthy is the terrible example of the crippling of another's life by one's egoism, as in Rosamund Vincy and Lydgate, to whom Casaubon and Doro-



thea form so fine a parallel and contrast. The moral of *The Spanish Gypsy* lies in the ruin wrought to the great schemes of Zarca by the egoistic loves of Silva and Fedalma. The whole aim of the novel as George Eliot wrote it might be summed up in the words, καθαρισμός of egoism.

The whole artistic career was dominated by these ethical aims; in her last work, *The Impressions of Theophrastus Such*, she applied herself consciously to direct ethical teaching. The book consists of disconnected examples of popular moral errors from which George Eliot would free the world, 'debasing the moral currency,' 'the modern Hep! Hep! Hep!' and so on. As a consequence, the artistic merits of *Theophrastus Such* were far below those of her other books, and it will never have much more than a pathological interest for the student of her works.

It remains to speak of her attempts in verse. George Eliot will always afford a striking example of the truth that the essential quality of the poet is the gift of song. All the other qualities required for poetry were possessed by her in high measure, yet it is granted on all sides that her poetical attempts were failures. The 'brother and sister' sonnets and the Comtean hymn, 'O may I join the choir invisible!' in the *Jubal*

volume, a speech of Zarca's ('Nay, never falter'), and a fine description of Truth by Sephardo in *The Spanish Gypsy*, with, perhaps, Ladislaw's song, 'Oh me, oh me, what frugal cheer my love doth feed upon!'—these may find a place in anthologies, but that is all.

Writing now with the sense of her loss still fresh, it is impossible to forget that, for those who knew her personally, she herself was her greatest work. By her own training she made herself probably the most accomplished woman the century has seen. She brought to the world of art a greater extent of culture than any predecessor, with the possible exception of Goethe. Not alone was she a veritable pundit in languages, with mastery of French, German, and Italian, and serviceable knowledge of Latin, Greek, Spanish, and Hebrew; she was widely learned in science and philosophy, and deeply read in history; her works teem with evidence of her intimate knowledge of music and painting. Add to all these accomplishments a width of sympathy and acuteness of observation seldom equalled, and one can form some idea of the rich nature just taken from us. She could draw such characters as Maggie Tulliver and Dorothea Brooke, Mary Garth and Gwendolen Harleth, Fedalma and Romola, because she

herself had much that was present in them. She has done a great deal for the cause of woman by direct teaching, but she has done most by giving the world assurance of the possibilities of woman's excellence.

‘THEOPHRASTUS SUCH’



ANY new book of George Eliot has to encounter the formidable rivalry of her earlier productions. In this age of competitive examinations it is inevitable that some attempt should be made to ‘place’ the new work in its ‘order of merit.’ Such a test, however, tells with crushing force against the *Impressions of Theophrastus Such*, which is slighter in conception, less finished in execution, and altogether of less artistic value than any other work that has appeared under her name. In it are seen all the characteristics of her later ‘manner’ which critics have had to deprecate. The scientific interest and tone of her second period culminate in these studies of mental pathology. The consummate literary artist has degenerated into the student of social psychology.

George Eliot’s literary development falls clearly and sharply into two stages. In the earlier period, from the *Scenes of Clerical Life* to *Felix Holt* (with the exception of *Romola*, which stands apart in a sphere of its own,

where *The Spanish Gypsy*, had it been written in a natural medium, might have joined it), she went back with loving memory to the days and scenes of her childhood. In that wonderful series of works she produced living pictures of mid-England in the pre-Reform days before old Leisure was dead, and while the modern spirit was unborn. For width of conception, for accuracy of touch, for nobility of tone, those works have a place apart in English fiction. The next two novels, *Middlemarch* and *Daniel Deronda*, displayed a new set of literary motives in their composition. The loving interest of the artist in human nature was fused with the intellectual interest of the scientific observer of the social organism. The tales moved in a larger sphere, had a wider scope, and also a deeper background than the earlier works. A new view of the relations of man and society, and with it a new philosophy of history, informed every page and set every incident in a new light. Along with this change or development of tone there went a noticeable change of manner. Dealing with conceptions novel to her readers, George Eliot had to put them directly before their eyes in passages only interesting from a speculative point of view. But this very need of explanation argued incomplete 'artistry' (to use a word of Mr.

Browning's); there was evidently not that direct *rapproch* with her audience which is a necessary pre-requisite of all great literary art. However well suited Comtean conceptions may be for appeals to the literary emotions, such appeals cannot fail to be less telling when accompanied by elaborate explanations of the conceptions upon which their efficacy depends. This reflective or scientific side of her later works has seriously diminished their effectiveness, and the attempt to rouse an interest in the history of modern Judaism in *Daniel Deronda* was, with the ordinary reader, a complete failure. And it must be remembered that in really great works of art the decision rests with the ‘ordinary reader’; success is here the real test of merit. No poem is great if only a small coterie admire it. What is to be the decision on George Eliot's last two great works depends upon the future of the speculative system with which they are connected. If the social philosophy there taught be that of the future, then *Middlemarch* and *Daniel Deronda* may become as gospels. But the risk has been run of subordinating the eternal truths of art to what may be the temporary opinions of science; and, in any case, the presence of the purely analytical element in her later works must necessarily detract from

their artistic value as indicating a certain spiritual divergence of George Eliot from her readers. As a matter of fact, the intellectual or scientific element in the last two works did alienate her audience's sympathy, and thus frustrated the artist's function, to 'arrest, arouse, and excite.'

This scientific element comes to a head in *Theophrastus Such*. Instead of a new novel, George Eliot has given us some careful but unsympathetic analyses of certain phases of human character: admirable dissections, no doubt; but life has fled under the scalpel. Our emotions refuse to be moved by a description of Aliquis or Quispian; and, what is more, the author herself fails to feel the artist's sympathy with her creations. The pathos of Merman's struggle against the errors of Grampus, in the section entitled 'How we encourage Research,' is nullified by a certain kindly contempt which finds expression in some rather Teutonic or 'cetacean' witticisms. And throughout there is a tendency to harshness in censure which is not to be found in the writer's more extended works. The whole book is devoted to the foibles and failings of man, and thus leaves an unpleasant feeling. The head, not the heart, has produced this book, the reader feels, and his heart fails to respond to pure intellect. It is worthy of note that most of the sketches

deal with phases of literary life which have been the object of George Eliot's mature and conscious observation. It would seem that the novelist's plastic period closes at an early age : Dickens was never at home with railways, George Eliot as an artist feels strange after the Reform Bill is passed. Of later London life she has, no doubt, been an observant spectator, but there is the greatest possible difference shown in the reproductions in her earliest and latest work : spontaneous art in the *Scenes of Clerical Life*, conscious effort in these *Sketches of Literary Life*. And in her latest book the nearest approach to the manner of her first period is displayed in the supposed autobiographical recollections of Mr. Such when he is ‘looking back’ to ‘the time when
 ‘ the fitful gleams of a spring day used to show
 ‘ me my own shadow as that of a small boy on
 ‘ a small pony, riding by the side of a larger
 ‘ cob-mounted shadow over the breezy up-
 ‘ lands which we used to dignify with the
 ‘ name of hills, or along by-roads with broad
 ‘ grassy borders and hedgerows reckless of
 ‘ utility, on our way to outlying hamlets,
 ‘ whose groups of inhabitants were as distinct
 ‘ to my imagination as if they had belonged
 ‘ to different regions of the globe.’

The passages descriptive of earlier England in the same section are in her very best style,

and contrast markedly with the first section, 'Looking Inward,' where the pseudonymous writer analyses with subtle skill his claims as a scientific observer and describer of other men's failings. The following quotation shows the old manner:—

'Our rural tracts—where no Babel-chimney scales the heavens—are without mighty objects to fill the soul with the sense of an outer world unconquerably aloof from our efforts. The wastes are playgrounds (and let us try to keep them such for the children's children who will inherit no other sort of demesne); the grasses and reeds nod to each other over the river, but we have cut a canal close by; the very heights laugh with corn in August or lift the plough-team against the sky in September. Then comes a crowd of burly navvies with pickaxes and barrows, and while hardly a wrinkle is made in the fading mother's face or a new curve of health in the blooming girl's, the hills are cut through or the breaches between them spanned, we choose our level, and the white steam-pennon flies along it. But because our land shows this readiness to be changed, all signs of permanence upon it raise a tender attachment instead of awe: some of us, at least, love the scanty relics of our forests, and are thankful if a bush is left of the old

‘ hedgerow. A crumbling bit of wall where
 ‘ the delicate ivy-leafed toad-flax hangs its
 ‘ light branches, or a bit of grey thatch with
 ‘ patches of dark moss on its shoulder and
 ‘ a troop of grass-stems on its ridge, is a
 ‘ thing to visit. And then the tiled roof of
 ‘ cottage and homestead, of the long cow-shed
 ‘ where generations of the milky mothers
 ‘ have stood patiently, of the broad-shouldered
 ‘ barns where the old-fashioned flail once made
 ‘ resonant music, while the watch-dog barked
 ‘ at the timidly venturesome fowls making
 ‘ pecking raids on the outlying grain—the
 ‘ roofs that have looked out from among the
 ‘ elms and walnut-trees, or beside the yearly
 ‘ group of hay and corn stacks, or below the
 ‘ square stone steeple, gathering their grey
 ‘ or ochre-tinted lichens and their olive-green
 ‘ mosses under all ministries,—let us praise
 ‘ the sober harmonies they give to our land-
 ‘ scape, helping to unite us pleasantly with
 ‘ the elder generations who tilled the soil for
 ‘ us before we were born, and paid heavier
 ‘ and heavier taxes, with much grumbling,
 ‘ but without that deepest root of corruption
 ‘ —the self-indulgent despair which cuts down
 ‘ and consumes and never plants.’

The next quotation illustrates the new style :—

‘ Introspection which starts with the pur-

‘ pose of finding out one’s own absurdities is not
‘ likely to be very mischievous, yet of course
‘ it is not free from dangers any more than
‘ breathing is, or the other functions that keep
‘ us alive and active. To judge of others by
‘ one’s-self is in its most innocent meaning
‘ the briefest expression for our only method
‘ of knowing mankind ; yet we perceive it has
‘ come to mean in many cases either the
‘ vulgar mistake which reduces every man’s
‘ value to the very low figure at which the
‘ valuer himself happens to stand ; or else, the
‘ amiable illusion of the higher nature misled
‘ by a too generous construction of the lower.
‘ One cannot give a recipe for wise judgment :
‘ it resembles appropriate muscular action,
‘ which is attained by the myriad lessons in
‘ nicety of balance and of aim that only
‘ practice can give. The danger of the in-
‘ verse procedure, judging of self by what one
‘ observes in others, if it is carried on with
‘ much impartiality and keenness of discern-
‘ ment, is that it has a laming effect, enfeebl-
‘ ling the energies of indignation and scorn,
‘ which are the proper scourges of wrong-doing
‘ and meanness, and which should continually
‘ feed the wholesome restraining power of
‘ public opinion.’

In terming these *Impressions* scientific, we do not mean to say that they are written

in any scientific jargon ; indeed, we have less of sesquipedalian technicalities than in *Daniel Deronda* ; but the whole tone is scientific. Without indulging in any such elaborate antitheses as are the glory of the schoolboy's essay, it may be said that the artistic and scientific modes of treating human nature differ in this, that science seeks to find general analogies, while art aims at individual realities. The sketchy character of these studies no doubt brings into greater prominence their want of artistic reality. If the author had elaborated any of them into novels or even into ‘scenes,’ the artist instinct would have given life to the dead bones of scientific analysis. And what is more, the reader would have been spared that unsympathy with her own puppets which may be scientific impartiality, but is certainly inartistic harshness. Humour would then have dealt tenderly with those deficiencies which wit, and that of a somewhat lumbering character, now mercilessly exposes. One of the sections deals with the habit of scoffing and parody as ‘debasing the moral currency,’ yet what is it but debasing the artistic currency to ring the changes on Grampus, Lord Narwhal, Prof. Sperm N. Whale, Dugong, and Butzkopf (= *Delphinus orca*) ? The name Merman brings into humorous contrast his more human qualities ; but is

not the 'ancient and fish-like smell' with which Teutonic erudition is, by implication, connected in these appellatives, just a case of 'debasement of the moral currency' in its depreciation of the minute accuracy and unselfish devotion of German scholarship? Indeed, the names throughout throw much light on the characters of the book. In most cases they represent exactly that particular phase of a character which is brought forward, the limb which is to represent the whole figure. We can all guess beforehand to what sort of characters names like Touchwood, Mordax, and Scintilla will be applied. The more individual the name the more of the uncertainty of real life about the character: that will be found to be a good working test. Thus Pummel, who serves in some inexplicable way as a 'watchdog of knowledge,' stands out well defined. 'What is the cause of the tides, Pummel?' 'Well, sir, nobody rightly knows. Many gives their opinion, but if I was to give mine, it 'ud be different.' That is a touch worthy of the hand that drew Mrs. Poyser and Dolly Winthrop.

And as the scientific spirit shows itself in these unreal abstractions of truncated characters, so we have it again in the manner of their presentation. The inordinate length of the sentences and the frequent obscurity of

sense are other symptoms of the same characteristic. Science abhors the epigram ; its half-truth, though it may be the better half of truth, is repugnant to the exactness of science. For purposes of science we must have all the amplifications and exceptions necessary for accuracy, and consequently we must have long and unwieldy sentences. In *Theophrastus Such* we have noticed one sentence dragging its laborious length over twenty-two lines, and we reckon the average length at about eight lines. In one place it takes two whole pages (pp. 288, 289) to complete four sentences. Another 'note' of the scientific style is its tendency to draw out all the attenuated meaning of a sentence. We have many instances of sentences which contain truths that are tolerably obvious, in phraseology by no means obvious to a first reading. The book throughout is hard reading, and the style at times harsh in the extreme ; what a falling off from the limpid truths of her earlier books ! Even in *Daniel Deronda* the reader comes across such fine things as 'Those who trust us educate us'—a noble truth, nobly expressed. He will have difficulty in finding a single sentence in this book which is worthy to be put by its side.

The artistic value of the book is further spoiled by its evident didactic purpose. If the characters here delineated do not 'adorn

a tale,' they are certainly intended to 'point a moral.' Throughout George Eliot's literary career ethical interests have been predominant. With her the novel has been morality teaching by example. But hitherto she has been content with the subtle insinuation of the artist, and has left alone the direct assault of the preacher; she has given texts, not sermons. But in her last book there is rather too much direct preaching; it might be a little hard, but it would not be altogether untrue, to call the *Impressions* skeleton sermons. Even from the ethical point of view the result is unsatisfactory; how much less effective a lesson is taught by Mixtus than by Lydgate in *Middlemarch*, though this is partly due to necessarily lighter treatment. With the character of her teaching every one is now familiar. Subordinate yourself to the social organism, suppress self; this is her ever-recurring cry. All honour to the nobleness and purity of the teaching. After all, that is the characteristic which raises this book above all other descriptions of 'characters,' from the second book of Aristotle's *Rhetoric* to La Bruyère; but it comes too often to the surface, is pressed too markedly upon our notice.

Nowhere does the inferior effectiveness of the intellectual as compared with the artistic treatment of a subject come into greater

prominence than in the last chapter of the book ‘The Modern Hep! Hep! Hep!’ (the rallying cry of the persecutions of the Jews by the Crusaders). That George Eliot should feel tempted to defend her choice of a subject in *Daniel Deronda* is only natural; but the striking thing is how far inferior is this defence, appealing to the intellect, when compared with exactly the same arguments as urged by the passionate rhetoric of Mordecai in the book itself. Ignorance of, and want of sympathy with, modern Judaism may blind the reader to the extraordinary power of Mordecai’s orations, perhaps the greatest *tour de force* of their author; but any one can see how much more effective, even from an argumentative point of view, are the passionate utterances of the latest prophet than the calm reasoning of his creator.

We have dealt with *Impressions of Theophrastus Such* in comparison with its author’s other works, and it is clear that it cannot, in conception, style, or effectiveness, stand the test. It may consequently appear somewhat unfair to upbraid the book for failing to be what it does not profess to be. But a great artist owes duties to the world as much as deserves gratitude from it. When one who has it in her power to add to the world’s wealth of beauty turns aside from the arduous

conception of a great work to execute preparatory sketches not worthy of mention by the side of her other works, it is impossible to refrain from deploring the loss to the world. Let others take upon themselves to compare these 'characters' with similar literary productions; for us none but herself can be her parallel. Others may take up the half-disguised challenge of the motto from Phædrus (3 *Prol.* 45-50); we do not care to discuss whether Pepin is Mr. Gladstone or Dugong Du Bois-Reymond.

For us, the chief interest in George Eliot's new work has been that which we are confident will be its chief interest to the future students of her works. The light thrown by it on the scientific strain in her literary character, the light thrown upon the workmanship of her second period, give the book a sort of pathological interest to the student of literature. The choice of the autobiographical form (used only once before, in the remarkable sketch *à la* E. A. Poe, *The Lifted Veil*) may have its significance for the next generation. But, apart from these points of view, the studies are but chips from the workshop, which might well have been left on the ground, only to be lifted thence at the time when everything of the author shall become precious.

‘ESSAYS’

THESE essays will not add to the reputation of their author. Reprinted chiefly from the *Westminster Review*, it would be difficult to say that they stand prominently above the general average of such essays. Each of the quarterlies has created for itself a type, and these reviews are of the type familiar to us in such writers as the late W. R. Greg. They date from the period before Mr. Matthew Arnold had imported the method of Sainte-Beuve into English criticism, and in consequence they suffer by comparison with later work of a more subtle and artistic character. George Eliot's essays have not sufficient individuality to deserve new life for their own sake ; on the other hand, they throw valuable light on certain problems connected with her art, and on this account merit republication.

The collection inevitably raises what must be the chief critical problem in connection with the literary career of George Eliot. How is it, the reader is impelled to ask, that a mind which produced these essays chiefly

during the years 1855 and 1856 could have given the *Scenes of Clerical Life* to the world a year later? What was the determining motive which changed the translator of Strauss and Feuerbach and the writer of these essays into the loving creator of Mr. Gilfil, of Bartle Massey, and of Dinah Morris? It is not so much the late flowering of her genius that is noteworthy. The end of the 'thirties' seems the appropriate period for a novelist's *début*. Both Thackeray and Miss Austen were thirty-seven (the same age as George Eliot in 1857) when *Vanity Fair* and *Sense and Sensibility* respectively appeared; Trollope was thirty-nine when *The Warden* was published; and Walter Scott was as old as forty-three when *Waverley* first delighted the world. But all these had given indication in one way or another of their powers, and had certainly not given indication of ability of quite a different calibre and in quite an opposite tendency of mind; whereas George Eliot up to her first appearance as a novelist had shown marked capacity for abstract thought, the very antithesis of the concrete imagination essential for the novelist.

Up to the age of thirty-seven what do we find in George Eliot's writings? A vivid appreciation of the course of religious thought, a considerable power of social generalisation,

and, above all, a deep interest in the scientific and philosophic speculations of her time. If any one had ventured a prophecy of her future career, he would surely have anticipated some incursion into the region of religious reconstruction, as was the case with her friend Miss Hennell. He might have foreseen in her another Harriet Martineau, with a deeper ethical basis, but with the same tendency to pure reason. The last thought that would have entered the minds of her most intimate friends up to that date would have been that Marian Evans would revive in the enduring form of art the reminiscences of her early days, which she seemed to have left so far behind her.

Certainly the essays before us indicated no such future. One of them, indeed, dealing with the *Natural History of German Life*, proves that George Eliot had observed as closely the English peasant as her author Riehl had studied the German species. Take the following picture :—

‘Observe a company of haymakers. When
 ‘you see them at a distance, tossing up the
 ‘forkfuls of hay in the golden light, while the
 ‘waggon creeps slowly with its increasing
 ‘burthen over the meadow, and the bright
 ‘green space which tells of work done gets
 ‘larger and larger, you pronounce the scene

‘ “smiling,” and you think these companions
‘ in labour must be as bright and cheerful as
‘ the picture to which they give animation.
‘ Approach nearer, and you will certainly find
‘ that haymaking time is a time for joking,
‘ especially if there are women among the
‘ labourers; but the coarse laugh that bursts
‘ out every now and then, and expresses the
‘ triumphant taunt, is as far as possible from
‘ your conception of idyllic merriment. That
‘ delicious effervescence of the mind which we
‘ call fun has no equivalent for the northern
‘ peasant, except tipsy revelry; the only realm
‘ of fancy and imagination for the English
‘ clown exists at the bottom of the third
‘ quart-pot.’

This passage certainly shows observation, but for all one can tell it may merely be the scientific observation of the psychologist, not the sympathetic reproduction of the artist. As yet it lacks the concretising touch. Similarly, when the writer goes on to remark, ‘ It is quite true that a thresher is likely to
‘ be innocent of any adroit arithmetical cheat-
‘ ing, but he is not the less likely to carry
‘ home his master’s corn in his shoes and
‘ pocket,’ we have no warranty that this could be expanded into the Ben Tholoway of *Adam Bede*. And even when George Eliot notices the custom of distinguishing cousins by refer-

ring them to their father's name, we cannot deduce the figure of Timothy's Bess's Ben in the same novel. Observation is, indeed, needed for the novel, but some kinds of observation are destructive of all individualising. Tell a painter to observe his hand as he paints and the result will be disastrous. Similarly, if a writer consciously notices the processes which make up his creations, they are doomed as artistic presentations. Observation must have become unconscious and ingrained in the artist's mind before it can aid in giving the realistic details of the novel.

And further, the novelist requires something more than keen observation of the workings of human nature; this is useless without the power and the love of story-telling. Nothing in these essays, nothing in the impression George Eliot made on her friends, indicated her possession of the faculty that builds up incident and character into a story. To the last she was somewhat deficient in this, as is shown by the fact that she displays none of the worker's joy in her own production. To tell a story requires that one should have lived a story. And it was probably the exceptional nature of her relations with George Henry Lewes, which commenced in 1854, that brought about the change in George Eliot which we have been attempting

to point out. Without going into the merits of the case, for which there are at present no trustworthy data, it is clear that to George Eliot the anti-social attitude which circumstances caused her to take up brought a complete revolution in her whole moral being, which was shaken to the depths. The modern novel is one of problem, not of action, and her own problematic position rendered her the more sensitive to the artistic side of this form of the novel.

These remarks may serve to illustrate a remarkable passage in the same essay from which the previous quotations were taken. George Eliot's theory of the function of the novel is there given, as well as her view of Dickens's art, which was developed by George Henry Lewes in the *Fortnightly Review* after Dickens's death. The whole passage deserves quotation :—

‘The greatest benefit we owe to the artist,
‘whether painter, poet, or novelist, is the ex-
‘tension of our sympathies. Appeals founded
‘on generalisations and statistics require a
‘sympathy ready-made, a moral sentiment
‘already in activity; but a picture of human
‘life such as a great artist can give surprises
‘even the trivial and the selfish into that
‘attention to what is apart from themselves,
‘which may be called the raw material of

‘ moral sentiment. When Scott takes us into
 ‘ Luckie Mucklebackit’s cottage, or tells the
 ‘ story of *The Two Drovers*,—when Words-
 ‘ worth sings to us the reverie of *Poor Susan*,—
 ‘ when Kingsley shows us Alton Locke gazing
 ‘ yearningly over the gate which leads from
 ‘ the highway into the first wood he ever saw,
 ‘ —when Hornung paints a group of chimney-
 ‘ sweepers,—more is done towards linking the
 ‘ higher classes with the lower, towards ob-
 ‘ literating the vulgarity of exclusiveness, than
 ‘ by hundreds of sermons and philosophical
 ‘ dissertations. Art is the nearest thing to
 ‘ life ; it is a mode of amplifying experience
 ‘ and extending our contact with our fellow-
 ‘ men beyond the bounds of our personal lot.
 ‘ All the more sacred is the task of the artist
 ‘ when he undertakes to paint the life of the
 ‘ People. Falsification here is far more per-
 ‘ nicious than in the more artificial aspects of
 ‘ life. It is not so very serious that we should
 ‘ have false ideas about evanescent fashions
 ‘ —about the manners and conversations of
 ‘ beaux and duchesses ; but it *is* serious that
 ‘ our sympathy with the perennial joys and
 ‘ struggles, the toil, the tragedy, and the
 ‘ humour in the life of our more heavily laden
 ‘ fellow-men, should be perverted, and turned
 ‘ towards a false object instead of the true one.
 ‘ This perversion is not the less fatal because

‘ the misrepresentation which gives rise to it
‘ has what the artist considers a moral end.
‘ The thing for mankind to know is, not what
‘ are the motives and influences which the
‘ moralist thinks *ought* to act on the labourer
‘ or the artisan, but what are the motives and
‘ influences which *do* act on him. We want
‘ to be taught to feel, not for the heroic artisan
‘ or the sentimental peasant, but for the
‘ peasant in all his coarse apathy, and the
‘ artisan in all his suspicious selfishness. We
‘ have one great novelist who is gifted with
‘ the utmost power of rendering the external
‘ traits of our town population; and if he
‘ could give us their psychological character—
‘ their conceptions of life, and their emotions
‘ —with the same truth as their idiom and
‘ manners, his books would be the greatest
‘ contribution Art has ever made to the
‘ awakening of social sympathies. But while
‘ he can copy Mrs. Plornish’s colloquial style
‘ with the delicate accuracy of a sun-picture,
‘ while there is the same startling inspiration
‘ in his description of the gestures and phrases
‘ of “Boots,” as in the speeches of Shake-
‘ speare’s mobs or numskulls, he scarcely ever
‘ passes from the humorous and external to
‘ the emotional and tragic, without becoming
‘ as transcendent in his unreality as he was a
‘ moment before in his artistic truthfulness.

‘ But for the precious salt of his humour,
 ‘ which compels him to reproduce external
 ‘ traits that serve, in some degree, as a cor-
 ‘ rective to his frequently false psychology, his
 ‘ preternaturally virtuous poor children and
 ‘ artisans, his melodramatic boatmen and
 ‘ courtesans, would be as noxious as Eugène
 ‘ Sue’s idealised proletaires in encouraging the
 ‘ miserable fallacy that high morality and re-
 ‘ fined sentiment can grow out of harsh social
 ‘ relations, ignorance, and want; or that the
 ‘ working classes are in a condition to enter
 ‘ at once into a millennial state of *altruism*,
 ‘ wherein every one is caring for every one
 ‘ else, and no one for himself.’

The frequent reference to psychology in this passage is significant, and indicates the dangerous tendency in George Eliot’s own art which led to the psychological strain in *Middlemarch* and *Daniel Deronda*, and finally resulted in the psychological scarecrows of *Theophrastus Such*. To the novelist ‘the curtain is the picture,’ and if he turns to the psychologist to analyse the painting, only the canvas and frame remain intact. There is too great a tendency for the psychological novelist to regard his characters as so many *corpora vilia* for his scientific theories. Luckily for George Eliot her interests were ethical rather than psychological, and if she ever does violence to

art, it is in the interest of morality rather than of science.

And this leads us to discuss for a moment the need of culture for the novelist. Obviously intellectual training is not alone sufficient. George Henry Lewes was exactly on a par with George Eliot in this regard, yet his *Ranthorpe* was deservedly a failure. Nor is culture combined with observation a complete equipment for the novelist. Riehl is allowed by George Eliot herself to have had a complete knowledge of the German peasant, and was besides a man of great culture; yet his *Culturgeschichtliche Novellen*, though republished by the Pitt Press, can scarcely rank as classic. On the other hand, Auerbach and George Eliot show that wide culture is no necessary bar to sympathetic delineation of the life furthest removed from culture. In so far as culture is real and has become instinctive and unconscious, it undoubtedly tends to give a wider background to the artistic picture and to affect us at more various points of contact. But observation, psychology, and culture can only increase the artistic value of the novel in so far as they are unconsciously applied and subordinated to the interest of character and incident. The selective principle with regard to the latter cannot be of an intellectual, conscious kind at all: it must clearly be

of an emotional nature akin to the moral faculty.

It is at this point that we touch the secret spring of George Eliot's art : her whole work is imbued with ethical notions. The novel is, no less than the poem, a criticism of life ; and the remarkable influence of George Eliot's novels has been mainly due to the consistent application of moral ideas to the problems set by each novel. Their stimulative effect was due to the fact that her ethical views were in consonance with some of the most advanced ideas of the age. The three chief principles which dominated her thinking were the reign of law in human affairs, the solidarity of society, and the constitution of society as incarnate history (the phrase is Riehl's). Flowing from these were the ethical laws which rule the world of her novels, the principle summed up in Novalis's words, ‘Character is Fate,’ the radiation of good and evil deeds throughout society, and the supreme claims of family or race. Add to these the scientific tone of impartiality, with its moral analogue, the extension of sympathy to all, and we have exhausted the *idées mères* of George Eliot's ethical system, which differentiates her novels from all others of the age.

These general remarks on George Eliot's art have been suggested by the essay on

Riehl's studies of the natural history of German life, in which the author gives at once her theory of the function of the novelist and her general agreement with Riehl on the psychology of the peasants who were to form the main subjects of her novels. Other essays in this volume are similarly interesting, owing to the light they throw on her religious views. Two of them—on the poet Young and on Dr. Cumming—deal with the chief moral defects she had found in the religion in which she had been brought up. In the former she deals with the Divine Policeman theory of virtue, which was so favoured by Voltaire and was the chief argument formerly used to defend the immortality of the soul. It is impossible to mistake the personal tone of the following protest against this theory :—

‘ We can imagine the man who “denies his
‘ soul immortal” replying, “ It is quite possible
‘ that *you* would be a knave, and love yourself
‘ alone, if it were not for your belief in immor-
‘ tality ; but you are not to force upon me
‘ what would result from your own utter want
‘ of moral emotion. I am just and honest, not
‘ because I expect to live in another world,
‘ but because, having felt the pain of injustice
‘ and dishonesty towards myself, I have a
‘ fellow-feeling with other men, who would
‘ suffer the same pain if I were unjust or dis-

‘ honest towards them. Why should I give
 ‘ my neighbour short weight in this world,
 ‘ because there is not another world in which
 ‘ I should have nothing to weigh out to him?
 ‘ I am honest because I don’t like to inflict
 ‘ evil on others in this life, not because I’m
 ‘ afraid of evil to myself in another. The fact
 ‘ is, I do *not* love myself alone, whatever logi-
 ‘ cal necessity there may be for that conclusion
 ‘ in your mind. I have a tender love for my
 ‘ wife, and children, and friends, and through
 ‘ that love I sympathise with like affections in
 ‘ other men. It is a pang to me to witness
 ‘ the suffering of a fellow-being, and I feel his
 ‘ suffering the more acutely because he is
 ‘ *mortal*—because his life is so short, and I
 ‘ would have it, if possible, filled with happi-
 ‘ ness and not misery. Through my union
 ‘ and fellowship with the men and women I
 ‘ *have* seen, I feel a like, though a fainter,
 ‘ sympathy with those I have *not* seen; and I
 ‘ am able so to live in imagination with the
 ‘ generations to come that their good is not
 ‘ alien to me, and is a stimulus to me to labour
 ‘ for ends which may not benefit myself, but
 ‘ will benefit them. It is possible that you
 ‘ might prefer to ‘live the brute,’ to sell
 ‘ your country, or to slay your father, if
 ‘ you were not afraid of some disagreeable
 ‘ consequences from the criminal laws of
 ‘ another world; but even if I could con-

‘ceive no motive but by my own worldly
‘interest or the gratification of my animal
‘desires, I have not observed that beastliness,
‘treachery, and parricide are the direct way
‘to happiness and comfort on earth.’”

Again, in the scathing review of Dr. Cumming’s sermons, George Eliot protests with equal energy against the older Evangelical teaching that all virtue is useless unless done *ad maiorem Dei gloriam* (p. 192). We thus see that it was disagreement with the ethical foundations of the current theology of her time which caused her revolt from it. Again, the chief interest of a somewhat unsympathetic review of Mr. Lecky’s *History of Rationalism* consists in a passage at the end, in which she calls attention to ‘the supremely important fact’ that science had brought about a conception of the orderly action of law on human nature, a conception which, as has been seen, dominated her whole thought.

The only paper of purely literary interest in this volume is one on Heine, which is for the most part made up of translations of autobiographic fragments. It contains, indeed, an elaborate contrast of wit and humour, which is hardly more successful than the many other attempts in the same direction, and an antithesis of French wit and German humour, which is merely an expansion of a popular prejudice.

One fine illustration redeems the essay, however; George Eliot gives as a specimen of a Heinesque lyric Wordsworth's *She dwelt among the untrodden ways*, the last line of which is exactly in the manner of Heine. For the rest one is surprised at the very ordinary and external character of her criticism. Her mind was clearly constructive, not critical, and it is a fundamental error to suppose that her genius was analytical.

An *Address to Working Men*, by Felix Holt, and an account of a three-months' stay at Weimar complete the essays. The former repeats at some length the political harangues in the novel. When Mr. Lowe said, 'Come, let us educate our new masters,' George Eliot, in the character of a working man, said, 'Come, let us educate ourselves.' Her intensely conservative feeling comes out strongly in her appeals for the preservation of social order; the notion that society is incarnate history was sufficient to condemn with her any sudden alteration in social relations. The chief point of practical advice in the address is, however, the recognition of the need of culture and opportunities for culture by the masses. Of the account of Weimar it is sufficient to say that it might have been written by any English lady of education.

Attached to these essays are a few *Leaves*



from a *Note-Book* that might very well have been omitted. They are of the period and the type of *Theophrastus Such*, and their style is of the same harsh character, as may be judged by the opening sentence :—

‘To lay down in the shape of practical moral
 ‘ rules courses of conduct only to be made real
 ‘ by the rarest states of motive and disposition,
 ‘ tends not to elevate but to degrade the
 ‘ general standard, by turning that rare attainment
 ‘ from an object of admiration into an
 ‘ impossible prescription, against which the
 ‘ average nature first rebels and then flings
 ‘ out ridicule.’

Of course a mind of the power of George Eliot’s could not have been occupied with such varied subjects without hitting upon some novel points of view or felicitous phrases. Of the latter we may pick out the reference of Young’s faults to a ‘pedagogic fallacy,’ akin to Mr. Ruskin’s ‘pathetic fallacy.’ Again, the following points are well put :—

‘Virtue, with Young, must always squint—
 ‘ must never look straight towards the im-
 ‘ mediate object of its emotion and effort.
 ‘ Thus, if a man risks perishing in the snow
 ‘ himself rather than forsake a weaker com-
 ‘ rade, he must either do this because his
 ‘ hopes and fears are directed to another
 ‘ world, or because he desires to applaud

'himself afterwards! Young, if we may believe him, would despise the action as folly, unless it had these motives. Let us hope he was not so bad as he pretended to be! The tides of the divine life in man move under the thickest ice of theory.'

'Love does not say, "I ought to love"—it loves. Pity does not say, "It is right to be pitiful"—it pities. Justice does not say, "I am bound to be just"—it feels justly. It is only where moral emotion is comparatively weak that the contemplation of a rule or theory habitually mingles with its action; and in accordance with this, we think experience, both in literature and life, has shown that the minds which are predominantly didactic are deficient in sympathetic emotion. A man who is perpetually thinking in monitory apophthegms, who has an intermittent flux of rebuke, can have little energy left for simple feeling.'

'The deepest curse of wrong-doing, whether of the foolish or wicked sort, is that its effects are difficult to be undone. I suppose there is hardly anything more to be shuddered at than that part of the history of disease which shows how, when a man injures his constitution by a life of vicious excess, his children and grandchildren inherit diseased bodies and minds, and how the

‘ effects of that unhappy inheritance continue
‘ to spread beyond our calculation. This is
‘ only one example of the law by which human
‘ lives are linked together : another example
‘ of what we complain of when we point to
‘ our pauperism, to the brutal ignorance of
‘ multitudes among our fellow-countrymen, to
‘ the weight of taxation laid on us by blame-
‘ able wars, to the wasteful channels made
‘ for the public money, to the expense and
‘ trouble of getting justice, and call these the
‘ effects of bad rule. This is the law that
‘ we all bear the yoke of, the law of no man’s
‘ making, and which no man can undo.’

But such passages are few and far between, and the general impression is left, how much the hack-work of genius resembles that of ordinary mortals. And though not all signs of genius are wanting, these articles are essentially unfinished studies and give no foreshadowing of the finished product. Their interest is purely relative to the light they throw on George Eliot’s mental development.

CROSS'S 'LIFE'*

THESE long-expected volumes have been compiled with great tact. Mr. Cross has aimed at making them a self-revelation of his wife's career and character, and he has been for the most part successful in the discharge of this difficult undertaking. Some slight confusion may be at times caused by the uninterrupted printing of extracts of diverse tone, date, and subject; this might have been obviated by judicious 'spacing' between the successive entries. There are obviously many omissions, and some of the materials already utilised in Miss Blind's little book would have borne repetition. At times, too, the reader may feel the need of comment or illustration, while the continental descriptions might have been curtailed. But, these slight deductions made, the book is remarkably satisfactory in tone, and is especially noteworthy for a rigid abstinence from anything that could pander to mere curiosity.

* *George Eliot's Life, as related in her Letters and Journals.* Arranged and edited by her Husband, J. W. Cross. 3 vols. (Blackwood & Sons.)

The novel method of extracts arranged in order of time tells the tale spontaneously, and George Eliot the woman stands forth revealed to the world in all the strength and refinement of her intellect, in all the clinging trustfulness of her moral and emotional nature. And as regards George Eliot the writer we learn as much as it is needful to know about the motives and processes of her art and the outward circumstances of her activity as author. The interest of the work naturally divides into the personal and the artistic sides of her life. By a kind of coincidence these are chiefly represented in the first and third volumes respectively, while the intermediate one is a sort of glorified Baedeker, giving George Eliot's impressions of her foreign travels between 1860 and 1870. The modern interest in development causes us in the first instance to concentrate our attention on the first volume, dealing with the life up to the production of the first book, *Scenes of Clerical Life*, including the difficult problem of her relations with George Henry Lewes. We see there a drama of religious development which is peculiarly significant, a display of intellectual precocity and progress, and, above all, a peculiarly sensitive affectionateness, which rules throughout the life and forms its most distinctive as well as most novel feature.

The peculiarity of the religious development which strikes one most prominently in reading the earlier letters is that, in advancing towards wider views than her earlier Calvinism, George Eliot still found objects for the religious emotion that moved her so strongly in her young days. She 'found religion,' as the ascetics say, in the later forms of her belief as in the earlier, and consecrated her life to the highest and the best equally in the days of Comtism and of Calvinism. This predominantly religious tone gives an emotional unity to her life which might be easily missed, but is really the key to its various seeming fluctuations. Beginning with the conventional expressions of self-conscious humility, 'Oh that I might be made as useful in my lowly and 'obscure station!' (i. 43) it is seen throughout life in her high ideal of her artistic mission, and finds a final utterance in her characteristic hymn, 'O may I join the choir invisible!' Even in the first revulsion from the old faith she felt the connection between that and the new, as the following passage shows:—

'For my part, I wish to be among the 'ranks of that glorious crusade that is seeking 'to set Truth's Holy Sepulchre free from a 'usurped domination. We shall then see her 'resurrection! Meanwhile, although I cannot

‘rank among my principles of action a fear of
‘vengeance eternal, gratitude for predestined
‘salvation, or a revelation of future glories as
‘a reward, I fully participate in the belief
‘that the only heaven here, or hereafter, is
‘to be found in conformity with the will of
‘the Supreme; a continual aiming at the at-
‘tainment of the perfect ideal, the true *logos*
‘that dwells in the bosom of the one Father.’
And in a very remarkable essay on conformity
and compromise, written when she was only
twenty-three, the reason of the connection is
fully grasped and explained:—

‘Agreement between intellects seems un-
‘attainable, and we turn to the *truth of feeling*
‘as the only universal bond of union. We
‘find that the intellectual errors which we
‘once fancied were a mere incrustation have
‘grown into the living body, and that we
‘cannot in the majority of cases wrench them
‘away without destroying vitality. We begin
‘to find that with individuals, as with nations,
‘the only safe revolution is one arising out of
‘the wants which their own progress has
‘generated. It is the quackery of infidelity
‘to suppose that it has a nostrum for all
‘mankind, and to say to all and singular,
‘“Swallow my opinions and you shall be
‘whole.” If, then, we are debarred by such
‘considerations from trying to reorganise

'opinions, are we to remain aloof from our
'fellow-creatures on occasions when we may
'fully sympathise with the feelings exercised,
'although our own have been melted into
'another mould? Ought we not on every
'opportunity to seek to have our feelings in
'harmony, though not in union, with those
'who are often richer in the fruits of faith,
'though not in reason, than ourselves?'

One thing is clear and instructive. The transition, brought about in the main by the Hennells, took a grievous weight from off her spirits. Whereas before the change we find her saying, 'I am weary, weary—longing for rest,' and speaking of herself as 'alone in the world,' so soon as the change comes, 'I can rejoice,' she says, 'in all the joys of humanity'; and she soon speaks of the duty of finding happiness and of learning how to be happy in a most satisfactory way. She is speaking from experience when in 1847 she suggests as a subject she should like to work out, 'the superiority of the consolations of philosophy to those of (so-called) religion.' It is curious to contrast all this with the totally dissimilar behaviour of Carlyle, who became the more morose the more widely he departed from ancestral faith. And there is plenty of evidence in these volumes that George Eliot's bodily sufferings began as early and were

probably as acute as Carlyle's. Before she is nineteen we hear of sick-headaches, and these follow any unusual exertion throughout life. Her gentle heroism under this infliction contrasts favourably with Carlyle's apostrophes to gods and men on the ills of dyspepsia.

Of equal interest is it in this first volume to follow the rapid growth of George Eliot's intellectual power. Very few details are given here of the actual character of her studies in early days. But here and there her thirst for knowledge makes itself seen even in the days of Calvinistic strictness. At times we catch glimpses of the artistic preparation. A world of her own creation is referred to opprobriously, and her imagination is her enemy in the days when all fiction was pernicious, as is stated in one of the first letters to Miss Lewis—an amusing bit of irony, in the old Greek sense. Very soon the tendency to scientific illustration comes, and the following passage shows the power of description as early as 1841 :—

‘The birds are consulting about their migrations, the trees are putting on the hectic or the pallid hues of decay, and begin to strew the ground, that one's very footsteps may not disturb the repose of earth and air, while they give us a scent that is a perfect anodyne to the restless spirit.’

And somewhat later there is a fine passage descriptive of fireworks seen on the Lake of Geneva, with 'the pale moon looking at it all with a sort of grave surprise.' We may notice the strain of ethical reflection so characteristic of the novels in the recognition of the purgative effect of war, in the maxim, 'Live and teach,' proposed as a substitute for the proverbial 'Live and learn,' in her estimate of trouble as being a deepened gaze into life. Among the chief intellectual influences before her father's death in 1849, which formed the first great crisis in her life, we can trace George Sand, Carlyle, Rousseau, and Spinoza, and, above all, the converse with the Hennells and the work at Strauss which resulted from this. But perhaps the chief impression of power is left by a few brief but weighty remarks on the men she came in contact with, even before she left the provincial circles. George Dawson she estimates at once as 'not a great man,' whereas Emerson is appreciated as the first *man* she had known. The same with men known through their writings. Disraeli has 'good veins, as Bacon would say, but there is not enough blood in them.' Hannah More was that most disagreeable of all monsters, a blue-stocking. Somewhat later, when on the *Westminster* staff, she rated J. S. Mill at something more nearly his true value

than most of her contemporaries, and was among the first to welcome the promise of Mr. Herbert Spencer. Of all the chief gifts of intellect displayed in her works we find adumbrations before she left Coventry. We miss, however, every indication of wit or humour till the life of the capitals is reached in Geneva and London. The spirit of observation becomes self-conscious, and Lewes is hit off as a 'sort of miniature Mirabeau,' Alboni as 'a very fat siren,' Combe as 'an apostle with a front and back drawing-room.' Leroux 'disagrees with all but Pierre Leroux.' In short, we have all the indications of George Eliot the novel-writer except the novels. And even about these there is a remarkable quotation from a letter of Mrs. Bray to her sister on September 25th, 1846, exactly ten years before *Amos Barton*: 'Miss Evans looks very 'brilliant just now. We fancy she must be 'writing her novel.' Yet this must have only been an *Ahnung*—as Mr. Cross is fond of saying—for no people were more surprised at the revelation of George Eliot's abilities as a novelist than the Brays a dozen years after.

Her relation to the Brays is in many respects decisive and typical. We come to the secret recesses of her being, to the key of all that is problematic in her career and character, when we encounter the remarkable union of

hard-headed intellect and impetuous affection, such as we see in her letters to the Brays. Nor does this die away with youth: the same gushing tone—there is no other word for it—is kept up with Miss Hennell to the last, and is even adopted with friends gained in the decline of life. This stern independence of intellect combined with a complete dependence on others for the emotional life, gives the characteristic tone throughout her life, and we are continually coming across a severe philosophical disquisition side by side with an outburst of uncontrollable affection or longing. She has doubtless portrayed this side of her nature in Maggie Tulliver with her impulsive affection, her emotional dependence on others. But she had recognised it much earlier when speaking of herself as 'ivy-like as I am by nature,' and in this peculiarly womanly quality she remained a very woman to the last. Manly intellect and girlish heart were united in her to an unusual degree.

This problematic nature serves to explain—so far as it bears explanation—the crux of her life—her union with George Henry Lewes. Mr. Cross, with much tact and wisdom, refuses to discuss the question. The only contribution he gives to its solution is a letter addressed to Mrs. Bray a year after the 'union' was entered upon. Here the question is made

to turn on a difference of opinion as to the marriage laws, and George Eliot's only defence, if any, is that she has not entered on 'light and easily broken ties.' But as a matter of fact she would have herself owned that this was no defence against setting herself at variance with the moral instincts of all whom she held dear. It is true that six years before she had said, *à propos* of *Jane Eyre* :—

'All self-sacrifice is good, but one would like it to be in a somewhat nobler cause than that of a diabolical law which chains a man soul and body to a putrefying carcass.'

But that would be at best an excuse for Lewes, not for herself. As a matter of fact there was no excuse, and in a very significant letter to Mrs. Taylor she practically surrenders any pleas as regards the iniquity of the marriage laws, and desires the legal title she should theoretically have despised :—

'For the last six years I have ceased to be "Miss Evans" for any one who has personal relations with me—having held myself under all the responsibilities of a married woman. I wish this to be distinctly understood; and when I tell you that we have a great boy of eighteen at home who calls me "mother," as well as two other boys, almost as tall, who write to me under the same name, you will understand that the

'point is not one of mere egoism or personal dignity, when I request that any one who has a regard for me will cease to speak of me by my maiden name.'

In reality, however, the clue to her conduct is to be sought in the girlish impulsiveness of her affectionate nature, which seems so hard to connect with her accuracy and independence of thought. She speaks of Lewes having 'quite won my liking in spite of myself' a year before their flight, and her hurried letter to the Brays at the last moment shows that the momentous decision was the work of impulse. She had evidently found in him some one to cling to amid the dreary solitude of life in London lodgings, and Lewes took the responsibility of accepting her sacrifice.

In justice to Lewes it must be remembered that he could have had no idea of the transcendent nature of the woman whose life he was accepting. Mr. F. W. Myers tells a story of some impudent ass who wrote to George Eliot after *Middlemarch* condoling with her for being mated to a Casaubon. There would have been less incongruity if Lewes had been compared to Ladislaw, who was, one feels, almost equally unworthy of Dorothea. Lewes is gradually being rated at his true worth: a philosopher among journalists, a journalist among philosophers, he has left behind him

nothing that will live, not even the overrated *Life of Goethe*, the critical portions of which are very thin. But George Eliot was herself one of the first to protest against the habit of mind which requires equality of gifts in husband and wife, and we cannot hope that every Elizabeth Barrett will find her Robert Browning.

And it must be owned that, once the lapse committed, Lewes did all in his power to keep at a distance every bad influence. He encouraged her first writing, and checked by his vivacity the tendency to over-seriousness which came to her with the knowledge of her powers and responsibilities. All the petty details of life were warded off from her by Lewes with watchful care. The somewhat unreasoning sensibility to adverse criticism was carefully considered by Lewes, who acted as her private secretary. And all this was effected through long years often filled with illness of his own. He may have encouraged in later years the psychological strain of her work to its detriment, and whatever glimpses we have of his critical influence in early years seem by no means fortunate: it was through him, *e.g.*, that Dinah was made to marry Adam Bede.

And, above all, the lapse must be forgiven or forgotten which led to that fusion of the

intellect and the emotions necessary to the artistic impulse. Everything seems to show that George Eliot's memories of her home life would have slumbered for ever but for this moral crisis in her own life, which stirred her to the depths of her being and withdrew her from the conventions of society. There is not the slightest indication throughout the biography, except the chance shot of Mrs. Bray mentioned above, which could lead her friends to imagine any other future for George Eliot than one similar to that of her friend Miss Sara Hennell. Her attitude of moral defiance to the world threw her back on the resources of her own life and gave birth to the peculiarities of her art. What those peculiarities are, and the light thrown upon them by the book before us, must now demand our attention.

The problem of George Eliot's life is to explain how a mind of so eminently a speculative turn should have shown the artistic impulse for creation so late in life and should have succeeded so eminently. The characteristics of her art show us the reverse of this difficulty. We have to reconcile her distinct power of realising her characters with her equally marked capacity for what we may term moralising them. A well-known example will illustrate the union, in this case

the fusion, of the two modes of work. In the catastrophe of *The Mill on the Floss* the novelist describes the mass of broken timber bearing down upon the brother and sister (physicists say the boat would always keep ahead). Tom sees it, cries, 'It is coming, Maggie!' clasps her, and they meet their fate. For the artist who only wished to realise the scene this would suffice. But with George Eliot there is the equal need to 'moralise' it, and so she continues: 'The boat reappeared —but brother and sister had gone down in an embrace never to be parted: living through again in one supreme moment the days when they had clasped their little hands in love and roamed the daisied fields together.' The beauty of this passage must not blind us to its inartistic, or rather extra-artistic, character. The emotions, æsthetic or moral, which the artist desired to produce by this reference to childhood's days ought to have been produced spontaneously by the catastrophe itself if the previous presentation of their childhood had been artistically effective. But it is George Eliot's peculiarity that she tries to bring into consciousness those feelings which her narrative ought to have produced by itself. She makes two attempts to produce her effect—by artistic presentation and by philosophic reflection. By so endeavouring she practically

confesses the failure of her art to do its work unaided. But much of that failure consists in the nature of the work which she wished to do with her novels.

Before she had written any work of imagination, Lewes expressed his doubts whether she had the power of dramatic presentation, though she might have 'wit, description, and philosophy.' As it turned out, she possessed the power of dramatic presentation in a very high degree; the breakfast at which Arthur Donnithorne did *not* confess to Parson Irwine, the last meeting between Dorothea and Rosamund, Tulliver's inscription in the family Bible, the appearance of Silas Marner at the Rainbow, Klesmer's visit to the Meyricks, may be instanced as examples of this. But the power of imaginative presentation, though it must have always existed, came to her late in life. It was most probably aroused by the attitude of moral defiance toward the world which her relations to Lewes had brought about. But there is also evidence in these volumes that the process of artistic assimilation was with her unusually slow, as she recognised in an interesting letter to Madame Bodichon:—

'I do wish much to see more of human life
'—how can one see enough in the short years
'one has to stay in the world? But I meant

‘ that at present my mind works with the
‘ most freedom and the keenest sense of poetry
‘ in my remotest past, and there are many strata
‘ to be worked through before I can begin to
‘ use, *artistically*, any material I may gather in
‘ the present. Curiously enough, *à propos* of
‘ your remark about *Adam Bede*, there is much
‘ less “out of my own life” in that book—*i.e.*
‘ the materials are much more a combination
‘ from imperfectly-known and widely-sundered
‘ elements than the *Clerical Scenes*.’

But while her imagination was thus ruminating, as it were, her whole spiritual life was taken up with an entirely different order of interests. Beginning with that thirst of knowledge for its own sake which goes to make the great scholar, it was soon diverted into the two chief channels of intellectual interest which characterised her age—the decay of the older religious ideals and the growth of a scientific conception of the universe, including man. And with her these two branches of speculation were reconciled by her recognition of the facts of human emotion underlying both. The following passage from an instructive note on *The Spanish Gypsy*, unfortunately too long to quote in its entirety, puts the germ of George Eliot’s reconciliation of religion and science :—

‘ There is really no moral “sanction” but

'this inward impulse. The will of God is the same thing as the will of other men, compelling us to work and avoid what they have seen to be harmful to social existence. Disjoined from any perceived good, the divine will is simply so much as we have ascertained of the facts of existence which compel obedience at our peril.'

These facts which compel obedience are declared to be 'the part which is played in the general human lot by hereditary conditions in the largest sense and the fact that what we call duty is entirely made up of such conditions.' The scientific conception of law in human nature was combined by her with the moral or religious fact of duty. Besides this the Comtist view of society as an organism was translated into the ethical consideration of the radiation of good and evil deeds throughout society. The moral progress of the world would depend, according to her, upon the degree in which men's minds were trained to see the consequences of their egoistic impulses. In an interesting correspondence with the Hon. Mrs. Ponsonby, where she sharply distinguishes her theory from the physical Positivism of Professor Tyndall and others, she clearly puts this aspiration:—

'With regard to the pains and limitations of one's personal lot, I suppose there is not a

‘ single man, or woman, who has not more or less
‘ need of that stoical resignation which is often
‘ a hidden heroism, or who, in considering his
‘ or her past history, is not aware that it has
‘ been cruelly affected by the ignorant or selfish
‘ action of some fellow-being in a more or less
‘ close relation of life. And to my mind,
‘ there can be no stronger motive, than this
‘ perception, to an energetic effort that the
‘ lives nearest to us shall not suffer in a like
‘ manner from *us*.’

It is impossible to say with what success she would have handled these views in the connected exposition of a philosophical work. As all the world now knows, she chose to expound them in the form of fiction, and determined to make the novel what history is said to be—philosophy teaching by example. At first she was not conscious of any such aim. When the *Scenes* were completed she felt only ‘ a deep
‘ satisfaction in having done a piece of faithful
‘ work that will perhaps remain like a primrose
‘ root in the hedgerow and gladden and chasten
‘ human hearts in years to come.’ Nor is there any hint of conscious motive in *Adam Bede* and *The Mill on the Floss*, her two greatest works. But immediately after the great success of *Adam Bede* the sense of her responsibilities settled upon her with only too heavy pressure. She feels it her ‘ vocation to

‘speak to one’s fellow-men’ and make her work ‘an instrument of culture.’ And henceforward this motive was conscious with her, and in each of her creations she looks round for some idea which the fiction shall embody. The process begins with *Silas Marner*, which grew from ‘the merest millet-seed of *thought*.’ Of this she says: ‘It sets—or is intended to set—in a ‘strong light the remedial influences of pure, ‘natural human relations.’ And in *Silas Marner* the balance between artistic creation and philosophic construction is most evenly held of all her books, of which it is in a way the quintessence. Henceforth, however, the philosophic interest is predominant, and her words are intended more to point a moral than to adorn a tale. *Romola* has its moral summed up in the last words of the book, and in an elaborate letter to Mr. R. H. Hutton she avows her intention of expressing certain truths by the relations of Baldo and Baldassare, of Tito and his patrons, and seems to be chiefly interested in *Romola* herself as presenting a moral problem. The elaborate note on *The Spanish Gypsy* before referred to gives the *motif* of the work as the clashing of individual desires and hereditary claims. *Middlemarch*, as its Proem states, is a contribution towards the woman question, though its scale happily caused it to overflow into a study of provincial

life. *Deronda* was intended to ennoble Judaism in the estimation of Christians and of Jews, and it would almost seem from a letter to Professor Kaufmann, couched in extravagant terms, that the only object in introducing Grandcourt and Gwendolen was to contrast Christian society with Jewish family life, to the disadvantage of the former. In all these later works the novel in George Eliot's hand had become the *Tendenz-roman*, not alone the philosophic novel, as Mr. Shorthouse, for example, conceives it, but philosophy in the form of the novel.

It is not our intention to discuss here the artistic value of the *Tendenz-roman*. The function of criticism is to classify and analyse much more than to judge. Its artistic limitations are obvious: with the whole field of life before it, the *Tendenz-roman* has to confine itself to its *Tendenz*. Its artistic value is dependent in large measure on its philosophic truth. The temptation to philosophise formally has its dangers, as George Eliot recognised when she wrote to Mr. Blackwood that she is in danger of refining where novel-readers only think of skipping. But the point that comes out with most fulness in this *Life* is the high function which such writing must claim for itself, 'the high responsibilities of literature that undertakes to represent life.' The following catena of passages from the book

before us will show the sacredness which attached to George Eliot's calling as she viewed its functions :—

‘ My function is that of the *æsthetic*, not the doctrinal teacher—the rousing of the nobler emotions, which make mankind desire the social right, not the prescribing of special measures, concerning which the artistic mind, however strongly moved by social sympathy, is often not the best judge. It is one thing to feel keenly for one's fellow-being ; another to say, “ This step, and this alone, will be the best to take for the removal of particular calamities.” ’

‘ The things you tell me are just such as I need to know—I mean about the help my book is to the people who read it. The weight of my future life,—the self-questioning whether my nature will be able to meet the heavy demands upon it, both of personal duty and intellectual production,—presses upon me almost continually in a way that prevents me even from tasting the quiet joy I might have in the *work done*. ’

‘ I think *æsthetic* teaching is the highest of all teaching, because it deals with life in its highest complexity. But if it ceases to be purely *æsthetic*—if it lapses anywhere from the picture to the diagram—it becomes the most offensive of all teaching. ’

This lofty sense of the sacredness of her

calling may in some measure account for the sensitiveness which she showed towards adverse criticism. When a writer is advocating a doctrine it is natural that he should be disappointed if his views are not even seen. And certainly by couching her opinions in the form of novels George Eliot did her best to withhold them from all but the most thoughtful. Hence a continual feeling—often expressed in her diary—that her efforts had been vain, a ‘horrible scepticism’ as to the effectiveness of her work. Lewes used to keep from her all critical notices except those that were favourable. The *Athenæum* is considered to have given ‘the best literary critique’ of *The Spanish Gypsy*, while, on the other hand, certain expressions in a letter to Mr. Charles Lewes show that our review of *Theophrastus Such* displeased her. And, indeed, as was but natural, she got to know of most unfavourable criticisms, notwithstanding all her contempt for ‘damnatory praise from ignorant journalists.’ Her answers to those criticisms are often of interest; thus she informs one of her correspondents that there is not one thing put into Mr. Poyser’s mouth that is due to memory. If so, it is curious that she should make Parson Irwine say of one of them that it is as good as a fable of Æsop. So, too, we learn that there is not a single portrait in *Adam Bede*—a statement

that depends very much on the exact meaning to be attached to the term 'portrait.' This excessive sensibility is seen at its maximum intensity in connection with the imposture attempted by Mr. Liggins of Nuneaton. One would have thought that a woman possessed of such powers of humour would have been more impressed by the ridiculous than by the serious aspect of the incident. But George Eliot returns again and again to the subject in a tone of sincere annoyance.

And finally, the predominance of the philosophic over the artistic spirit in George Eliot has tended to make these volumes, containing the record of her private life, rather dull and—dare we say it?—commonplace. She was a great woman, but this is not a great book. Like all thinkers, she tended to weave a web of theory between herself and life, and seemed to reserve all her humour and liveliness for her books. It is possible that Mr. Cross has created this impression by an ill-judged excision of anything that does not display his wife on the stilts of philosophy and ethics. But as he claims vivacity as one of her prominent qualities, it is more likely that it did not display itself in her letter-writing. And the tendency to abstract theorising has removed from these volumes almost all personal traits of the many distinguished men and

women with whom George Eliot came in contact. Even the personal details of her own life had, for the most part, been discounted in the articles that appeared after her death. What we chiefly notice are some of her literary opinions and prejudices. Byron was the most vulgar-minded genius that ever lived, the *Iliad* is a semi-savage poem, *Père Goriot* a hateful book (*i.e.* has no *Tendenz*), the *Origin of Species* will not produce much effect because ill arranged, but expresses the adhesion of a well-known naturalist (this on the appearance of the book). Before the *Vie de Jésus* she felt more kinship with Renan than with any other contemporary writer, but afterwards she gives up her high estimate of Renan. At times we may see bits of the novels in the making. Overbeck at Rome clearly suggested Neumann in *Middlemarch*, Mr. Frederic Harrison seems to have suggested the *Legend of Jubal* and supplied the legal technicalities of *Felix Holt*. We may catch the origin of the opening scene of *Deronda* in the girl gambler described here (iii. 171). A sensible letter to Mrs. Beecher Stowe on spiritualism may be recommended to the notice of the Society for Psychical Research. Mr. Cross has given with admirable taste a few Boswellisms. His wife told him that *Romola* found her young and left her old. The interview between Dorothea and Rosamund was

written off in a fever of excitement, and stands now as at first written. But these items of interest are few and far between, and the book as a whole might more easily be the record of a *savant* than of a literary artist. In every way the total impression is sad and sombre. And so we lay down these volumes with the impression of a life disfigured by one great lapse that overshadowed it to the end, but ennobled by high gifts devoted with self-denying thoroughness to a lofty conception of the function of the depicter of human life. The novelist's art has never been made so sacramental as by George Eliot.



MATTHEW ARNOLD

April 15, 1888

MATTHEW ARNOLD

THE terribly sudden death of Matthew Arnold has deprived England of an intellectual force of a high order. A striking and influential individuality is lost to English thought and letters. Matthew Arnold was the poet and critic of the age of transition which separates so widely the England of to-day from the England of the Reform Bill, or, to come down even later, from the England of the Great Exhibition. The changes in taste, in feeling, in the general attitude towards the fundamental problems of religion, of society, and of politics, have been enormous, and in all of them, except, perhaps, the last, Matthew Arnold has been an abiding influence. We shall never, perhaps, fully appreciate the way in which he softened the asperities of the conflicts which raged round him by his imperturbable good humour, and even by the mannerisms which diverted the stress of feeling. The solvent of his criticism was diluted to the exact strength where it

could effect its purpose while giving least pain.

He began life as a poet, and in a measure remained one always, if we can divorce the poet from the technique of his art. His was a poetic force, a uniform recognition of the permanent power and reality of the ideal element in human character. His appeal was always to that, whether he were discussing Heine or Tolstoï, Irish affairs or Board schools. So far he was a poetic force in English thought and affairs. But in things specifically poetic he touched his readers less than any other Victorian poet of the first rank. Yet he is among the masters, his diction is unrivalled for purity and dignity, he strikes his notes with no faltering hand. Why then, is he not impressive? Because his problems and his moods are not poetic problems or poetic moods. Intellectual doubt has found its voice in Matthew Arnold's most sincere utterances, and doubt can never touch a wide circle. *Obermann Once More* or *The Scholar Gypsy* will answer to some moods of some men as few poems answer to the inmost depths. But the moods are rare among men, and the appeal of the poems must be as rare. Strangely enough, while Matthew Arnold deals most powerfully with one aspect of the inward conflict, he has been almost equally

successful in the most objective form of poems, the heroic narrative. When he was urging with all his command of paradox that the English hexameter—the existence of which still remains to be proved—was the best medium into which to translate Homer, he himself was giving in his *Sohrab and Rustum* the nearest analogue in English to the rapidity of action, plainness of thought, plainness of diction, and the nobleness of Homer. Yet even here we felt that something was wanting, as we feel in almost all attempts at reproduction of the Romance temper: it is not sincere, and cannot, therefore, be great. Where Matthew Arnold is sincere in his poetic work is when he gives expression to his ‘yearning for the light,’ and summons the spirit of renunciation to support him through the days of gloom.

These moods he reserved for expression in verse. In prose no one is less gloomy than he. If we might define him as a happy Heine, we should give the best point of view from which to survey his prose work, his criticism of life that underlies and involves all his criticism of books, of faiths, and of institutions. Like the German poet, he was armed with all the culture of his time—science does not count in such matters—and like him he played off the one side of his nature against

the other. But the circumstances of his life saved him from the bitterness of Heine, while they intensified that tendency to good-humoured tolerance which gave to his work much power in some directions and robbed it of much in others.

It is usual to speak of Matthew Arnold as having revolutionised English criticism, by which is usually meant book-criticism. As a matter of fact he did very little in the way of 'judging' books, and what he did in this way was by no means always instructive or trustworthy. His celebrated slip about Shelley's letters, the selections he made from Byron, may be recalled as instances of uncertain vision or imperfect appreciation. In introducing the methods of Sainte-Beuve into England, he transferred the interest in criticism from the books to the man. What he did in criticism was to introduce the *causerie*, and with it the personal element. Instead of the 'we' of the older *régime*, the critic, even if he use the plural pronoun, professes to give no more than the manner in which a new work strikes his individuality. If this method has been the cause or occasion of much affectation in contemporary criticism, it has raised criticism into the sphere of literary art by giving it the personal element. The personality of Matthew Arnold was, with all its affectations and

mannerisms, so attractive that a *causerie* with him charmed not so much by adding to our information about the author or his book, as because it added to our knowledge of Matthew Arnold.

His criticism of books, we have said, was a criticism of life, and here his work touched the deepest problems of his time, problems social and problems theological. We all know his method of exposition. A view being taken, a phrase, more or less felicitous, is selected to express the view, and henceforth the changes are rung upon the phrase till the dullest of readers cannot fail to grasp the particular view which it was desired to impress on him. The trick of iteration, exasperating as it was, effected its purpose, and the formulæ 'sweetness and light,' 'criticism of life,' 'barbarians,' 'Philistines, and populace,' 'the need of expression, the need of manners, the need of intellect, the need of beauty, and the need of conduct,' have bitten the more deeply into the contemporary consciousness because they were formulæ, and could be easily recalled. This effect was mainly mechanical; not so the discussions which led up to them, were summarised in them, or were deduced from them. Therein Arnold showed his powers of social analysis, and his powers were great. His summary of 'needs' given above

is a remarkable description of man as a social being. Again, the cultus of 'culture,' to which he gave the vogue, was in his hands something precise. Civilisation is a big thing to analyse or to talk about, yet we felt, when he was talking about it, that it was something real and definite that he was discussing, and not the vague abstractions of the sophist.

This power of analysis showed itself in the series of theological studies beginning with *Literature and Dogma*. As regards his own solution of the religious problem, if solution it can be called, little need here be said. His very formula, purposely vague and indefinite as it was, is its own condemnation. But it has not been sufficiently recognised how the introduction of his literary tone, his many-sidedness, and the gentle irony with which he treated all extremes helped to prevent an explosion of theological or anti-theological polemics. Mr. Morley has recently been confessing that the tone of the *Fortnightly* was needlessly aggressive. But for Matthew Arnold's intervention the struggle would have been *à outrance*. He brought into it the spirit of an 'honest broker,' and had effect with both parties, because each felt that he was in sympathy with its best self.

Yes, that is even so with the Philistines and the Nonconformists. Amid all his wit—or

rather because his wit was so mild and free from caustic—the Puritan part of the nation felt that he too was on the side of the angels. He was so respectable, after all. Herein comes the great difference between him and Heine, who was not respectable at all ; and Renan, who always shows a hankering after the life of *les gais*. But Matthew Arnold was intensely sensitive and scrupulous in this regard, almost to the point of Podsnappery. Therefore the British public would allow him a hearing on the problems of life.

There was no affectation in all this. The Puritan in him came near the self-restraint of his father's Romans, or the artistic balance of life which he respected in the best Greeks. He was too much at ease in Zion to be of the stuff of which prophets are made, yet there was something in him akin to the spirit of the old prophets. Hence it was that he was so influential with the Philistines ; he was in a measure of them, though he saw their faults and narrownesses. Half humorously he recognised this in one of his books, and there can be little doubt of its truth and of its influence. Because he was of them, the Philistines, *i.e.* Nonconformists and Low Churchmen, listened to him, with the result that the Low Church is no more ; and Nonconformity is Broad Church.

We have laid stress on the theological activity of Arnold because its importance is apt to be obscured by the fact that his particular way of putting his solution of theological difficulties is not likely to gain disciples. But for all that, the discussions have had as much effect on English theology as anything of the past quarter of a century, and he himself was in the right in laying stress upon his theological activity and its results as the most influential and most abiding part of his work.

A word or two may here be added on his general attitude towards politics. His appeal for detachment from party politics is part of a general tendency which seems to be dis-severing everywhere the thinking part of the nations from active share in the politics of the democracy. The formation of a party of Independents, advocated by Mr. Lowell in the United States, is an instance of what we mean. By adopting this attitude Matthew Arnold showed less than his usual insight and sagacity. His influence in this direction cannot be said to have been for good.

He that is gone would not have been satisfied with any estimate of his life-work which did not take account of his strivings for educational reform, especially as regards middle-class schools. In English social arrangements he saw one great blot, the separation of classes

which could be traced to school-days, and he argued, justly enough, that it would never cease till the enormous difference in the tone of boys' schools for the upper classes and of boys' schools for the middle classes was done away with. It cannot be said that his insistence on this point was effectual, though the improved tone of schools for middle-class girls may possibly be connected with it. But there can be little doubt of the brilliant suggestiveness of many of his interesting reports on education, which we trust will be now brought together in book form. Rarely have Blue-books been made so enjoyable as those which contained Matthew Arnold's racy comments on things in general, and school things in particular.

He was a poet throughout, we have said, and he himself has defined a poet as a critic of life. Would that all poets were critics so genial! In that respect the style was the man, and no man was so charming to his intimates as Matthew Arnold. It may be suspected that when we come to know the private lives of the men of letters of this, or rather of the preceding generation, few will leave so pleasant an impression, few will seem so livable with as he. That easy temper which perhaps prevented him from giving his message in a more assured tone, or from

giving a more assured message, made him a delightful companion. And a delightful companion he is, too, in his books, with their sub-acid egotisms, their easy flow of keen-sighted analysis; their sympathy with the ideal, and, above all, that determination to see things as in themselves they really are, which gives the virile strength that would otherwise be wanting. His books and he have done their work so well that they can never appeal to any later age with so much force as they have to this. But because they have had so direct an appeal to this, they must live as typical of our age and representative of it.

‘DISCOURSES IN AMERICA’*



VERY one will welcome another volume of *causeries* from the hand of our only English master in this branch of literature, Mr. Matthew Arnold. Notwithstanding the attempts of many would-be imitators, he alone possesses the lightness of touch, width of view, sanity of criticism, and individuality of style which are needed to give permanent value to what seems at first sight to be merely a form of the higher journalism. The combination of these qualities is rare enough to account for the influence possessed by the men in whom they occur. Mr. Matthew Arnold in England, M. Renan and M. Scherer in France, and Mr. Lowell in America, almost exhaust the list; and of all the masters of the *causerie* Mr. Matthew Arnold is in some respects the most influential in England, for reasons which may well engage our attention after we have made a few remarks on the present instalment of his work.

* *Discourses in America.* By Matthew Arnold. (Macmillan & Co.)

This consists of only three discourses—the Rede Lecture adapted to American audiences and the specially American lectures on Numbers and Emerson. With the aid of wide margins and a liberal amount of ‘fat,’ as the printers call it, the text is doled out in pages of but nineteen lines each, and thus the three articles are successfully expanded into a booklet of over two hundred pages. Small as it is, the volume differs favourably from some of the recent republications of Mr. Arnold’s utterances in that it contains only specimens of his best work, and we may perhaps add that in it he dismounts from his over-ridden hobby—State schools for the middle classes. Each of the three essays attracted attention when first delivered—readers will remember the ludicrous blunders made by the American reporters with the goddess Lubricity in *Numbers*—and they were as eagerly read when republished in magazines. Now collected in a volume, they will be as popular as any in the series in which they are published, and have a good chance of being revived in the far distant day when their copyright shall have run out—the most practical test that occurs to us to determine whether a book really belongs to English literature.

Much comment on essays so much commented on at the time of their appearance

were perhaps needless. We may remark, however, that the lecture on literature and science has lost somewhat in its passage across the Atlantic. There was a peculiar aptitude in its delivery in the Senate House at Cambridge, where everything seems to be telling for science rather than literature. And there was a specially interesting passage in the original, now omitted, which dealt with the difference of the two universities—Oxford the home of great movements, Cambridge of great men. On the general merits of the great question—literature or science as training for life—Mr. Arnold is clearly on the right side, and even Professor Huxley scarcely attempts to deny this. But it is curious that Mr. Arnold omits to notice that there is a side of literary work which tends to give all, or nearly all, the educational advantages claimed for science. A work like Munro’s *Lucretius* is in reality as scientific as Roscoe and Schorlemmer’s *Chemistry*. In Germany both would be included under the comprehensive ‘Wissenschaft.’ Observation, induction, hypothesis, verification, quantitative analysis, and even to some extent experiment, are all applicable to Homer or the ‘Nibelungenlied’ as to the triassic strata. Indeed, a good case might be made out for showing that Mr. Arnold, in his discourse on Numbers, is simply applying the

ordinary scientific law of error—the principle of deviations from an average so admirably applied in Mr. Galton's *Hereditary Genius*. His comfortable doctrine of the remnant is in reality based on a similar assumption, and much of it is seen to be untrustworthy when one remembers that the curve of error may take different forms, and the remnant be smaller though the numbers be larger. As a matter of fact, is it not the universal experience that the saving remnant, even in America, is small in proportion to the mass of self-seeking Philistinism? And if we turn to China or India, the doctrine of the remnant has very little comfort left for us. Opinions, too, might differ as to the extent to which the worship of the goddess Aselgeia is corrupting French culture. The success of a mediocre master like M. Ohnet, simply because he does not bow to the ruling goddess, is sufficient to show the strength of the protest against the worship of Lubricity.

Here, probably, Mr. Matthew Arnold would agree with us, the only difference of opinion being as to the extent of the evil. On this it may be remarked that it has been long existent without producing any widely apparent ill effects, and that it is in large measure counteracted by the intense family love of the Frenchman and the more robust

life of the provinces. But we prefer not to parade differences where there is so much with which we can agree and from which we can learn. The analysis of the French character and its threefold strain—Gallic, Latin, and Germanic—recalls some of the best parts of the *Celtic Literature*. The admirable quotations from Newman, Carlyle, Goethe, and Emerson, in the opening passage of the essay on the last, together with the remarks on each author—often but a word, but what an instructive word!—exhibit Mr. Arnold at one of his best moments; as, indeed, the whole discourse on Emerson shows him to us in one of his happiest hours of inspiration, and might be selected as giving an admirable specimen of his peculiar qualities as a critic of letters and of life; or, as Mr. Arnold would say, it gives us his method and his secret.

There is an apt phrase—we believe, of Professor Huxley’s—which exactly expresses the *differentia* of Mr. Arnold’s studies: they are lay sermons. The object of the sermon may be assumed to be the moral regeneration of the hearers. This is clearly and avowedly the object of most of Mr. Arnold’s utterances. Notice how he invariably picks out the favourite sin of his audience. At the Royal Institution, in the midst of the London season, he lectures on equality. At Cam-

bridge he avers that with the majority of mankind a little of mathematics goes a long way, and that science cannot satisfy the soul of man. He crosses to America, and there he chooses as his special topic Numbers, preaching to the text, 'The majority are bad.' For every one will recognise that Mr. Arnold's lectures have the note of the sermon method in this at least, that they start from a text—it may be from the Bible, it may be from Menander—to which the discourse returns time after time, with a reiteration which some may find wearisome, but which clearly effects the purpose of impressing itself on the method.

His method, then, is that of the lay sermon. Would that clerical sermons were ever as good! His secret is his subacid reasonableness and his serious levity or frivolous seriousness. What strikes one in his criticisms of life even more than their penetration is their sanity and completeness. Many a controversial victory he has won in discussions about letters or life, or sometimes even in politics, by attending to the one question, What are the actual and complete facts of the case? He takes human nature all round, and sees how far a proposed remedy answers to all its needs. Herein he is really penetrated by the scientific spirit in its best aspect, and he has been no insufficient teacher of the higher anthropology. That in

part is the secret of his influence. Men see that what he says tallies in the main with what they know, and at the same time they are half attracted half repelled by the tone in which he says it. If we may so put it, he pretends not to be serious, and by the very pretence convinces one of his seriousness. It is, in fact, this seriousness, the conviction his words convey that his deepest concern is with the things of moral import, that gives such authority to his word among Englishmen. The things of conduct are, after all, what both he and they have most at heart, and they listen to him as he discourses on things of sweetness and light—now, alas! becoming rarer and rarer with him—because they know that in his hands they have intimate bearing on conduct. Hence Mr. Matthew Arnold may say things in a tone which would be censured in another. There is a passage in these discourses about M. Blowitz and the Eternal which, even in Mr. Arnold, is as near want of taste as it is possible to go. But one knows that Mr. Arnold, after all, is not really lacking in reverence, and so the lapse is overlooked. Reflecting on this, one cannot help thinking what a force Mr. Arnold would be if he dropped his cloak of levity. He has given a clever sermon on Gray; text: ‘He never spoke out.’ One feels that Mr. Arnold has never

spoken out the faith that is in him. He began life as an Hellene of the Hellenes, and was as one of those who are at ease in Zion. He has gradually become more Hebraic than the Hebrews, but yet retains the easy manner of the sons of light. What a motive force he might be if he adapted his style to his matter ! Mr. Arnold has some admirable words on Carlyle here in the pages before us. Carlyle is weighed in the balance and found wanting ; but if we may deplore the want of sweetness in Carlyle, might we not regret its overabundance in Mr. Arnold's nature ? His best friends might wish to see him—they would certainly be curious to see him—lose his temper for once in a way over some subject that deserves to rouse his ire.

ROBERT BROWNING

December 12, 1889



ROBERT BROWNING

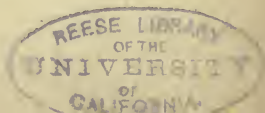


ONE by one the *Dii majores* are leaving us: Carlyle, George Eliot, Matthew Arnold; and now Robert Browning, a greater name than all these, has passed into silence. It is almost startling to notice how their death radically alters their relation to us. Not only is their work rounded off, finished in a double sense, completed into a system, informed with a new life, as if, indeed, the poet's soul had passed at once from the body to the works. The poet has gone; his works at once group themselves into an organic whole, and become his work. Yet a still more vital change comes over our relations to the imaginative creator when his bodily presence is withdrawn. He ceases to be ours alone; Robert Browning no longer speaks only for and to Victorian England. He becomes part of England of the past and of the future—part of the spiritual heritage for which Englishmen have in the past shown themselves willing to die—part of the English ideal, towards which the best of Englishmen aim to live. One advantage immediately accrues from the ces-

sation of all personal intercourse between the world and the poet. The idle chatter of relative merit, 'Is he greater than A?' 'Is he better than B?' dies away with his death. Not how great he was, but what he was, engages our attention, and the searching demand that the soul of Robert Browning makes upon each and all of us who care for the higher life of our nation is, 'What I have done for England, say.'

The kingdom of poesy hath many mansions. That on whose portals Robert Browning's name is inscribed is distinguished from its neighbours both by its huge size and by its massive strength. The style is Gothic with a curious infusion of Italian Renaissance. Notice, before we enter, the quaint gargoyles that in part adorn, in part disfigure, every portion of the architecture that is susceptible of ornamentation. Gaining entrance with some difficulty—for the porter is somewhat gruff and scant of speech, giving but slight guidance to the visitor—we are at first struck by the obscurity that reigns in the interior, only lit up here and there by lurid splashes of splendour at spots which are in direct contact with the outer sunshine. But one's eyes soon get accustomed to the dim religious light, and if we have to strain our attention to catch the scheme of ornamentation, our satis-

faction is the greater when we have caught it. The decoration is elaborate and masterly, but it almost always gives one the impression of being unfinished, owing to its over-elaboration. The subjects, again, are often on a grand scale, and often in the grand style, but many of them claim only to be quaint grotesques. The fertility of design is, however, extraordinary, and the mansion is abundantly spacious, each room and each cranny having its own individuality, marring somewhat the unity of design of the whole. Two or three of the tapestries strike us as of clearer outline and more finished design than the rest; one in particular in which the chief figure is a gaunt musician followed by a crowd of joyous children. Another, too, of three horsemen takes us, as it were, out into the open, and we seem to feel the air rush past us as they ride. But there is no need to complain of the atmosphere anywhere; the air is fresh and sweet throughout; no closeness, no clouds of incense or whiffs of stifling perfume offend the nostril. One suite of rooms entrances our attention by its original scheme of ornament. In each the same design, in itself somewhat repulsive, is repeated in mirrors of different shape, parabolic, elliptical, concave, and the rest, distorting the image in each case, but giving, on the whole, a curious impression of reality. Altogether



we leave the mansion with a feeling of having seen one of the great masterpieces of poetic architecture, and with an abiding sense of the high achievement and higher aspirations of the master builder.

But enough of allegory, though the one we give may serve as well as another to suggest the total impression made by Browning's work. The extent of his achievements is the most striking quality. Seventeen volumes represent the poet's legacy to his countrymen. And what volumes! Crammed with thought, suffused with imagination, crowded with figures with life more real than half the people we meet, filled with suggestion, historic, ethical, artistic, and contemporary, they represent at least fifty volumes, if their full meaning were drawn out and displayed. Nor has this huge bulk been attained by harping on a limited set of themes. On the contrary, his topics are bewildering in their variety. The players in *Hamlet* had not a more varied *répertoire*. No one could ever guess what a new volume of Browning would contain—whether it would be sportive or melodramatic, speculative or soul-searching. And the range of treatment was as extensive as that of subject. He was not a great metrical artist, but he at least utilised the metrical themes open to the English poet, with the

exception only of the more recent importations from France, the *rondeau* and the rest. His remarkable versatility is, perhaps, best shown by the fact that his most popular productions were descriptive pieces of pure action—the themes of Hamelin and Ghent—which were outside his ordinary range of interest, wide as that was.

‘My stress lay on the incidents in the development of a soul; little else is worth study.’ These words from the dedication to the reprint of *Sordello*—itself the key to all Browning’s more serious side—sum up his method. Spiritual dynamics, the influence of soul on soul, this is what his mind fixes upon amidst all the plexuses of things. Not action, but character, and not character formed, but in the forming—there is the staple of Browning’s art. And in that direction his power is unique in the world’s literature. Comparisons have been made with Shakespeare in this regard, but here the superiority is with Browning without a doubt, and a moment’s reflection will show why it must be so. The business of the true dramatist is with action—with character too, but character formed, and only so far as action brings out the character that is already there. The conditions of Shakespeare’s art prevented him from dealing with character formation, modification, elevation,

development, or degradation, to the extent that Browning deals with them. Here, too, is the secret of Browning's failure as a dramatist, for failure it was for a man of Browning's calibre not to excel pre-eminently. Who would not prefer to have *Colombe's Birthday* or *A Blot in the 'Scutcheon* as a dramatic idyll? And the reason is that the dramatic side of these dramas—the action—is not the thing for which the poet cares or makes his audience care. Two acts of *Colombe* pass without any action whatever. Browning had a quick eye for a dramatic situation; he was dramatic in that sense, if you will. But of the power of connecting such situations together into one organic whole, in which each should add force to each—of this, the true dramatic power, he had singularly little. Even *Pippa Passes* has, with all its grace and effectiveness, no real dramatic unity. Pippa passes through a series of dramatic situations, and so strings them together; but it is from the outside. Contrast the far more effective way in which a poet of infinitely less poetic force, but yet of keener dramatic instinct, M. François Coppée, has dealt with a kindred theme in *Le Passant*. No, Browning was no born dramatist, and was wisely advised by his own instinct to turn to 'Dramatic Idyls' or 'Dramatis Personæ,' or in other words, dramatic situations instead of dramas.

This interest in characterisation led him to one of the most original of his themes—the self-portrayal of the humbug, religious (Blougram), political (Schwangau), or social (Sludge). These are, undoubtedly, *tours de force* of a remarkable kind—so remarkable, indeed, that they condemn themselves as unfit topics for poetry. To be poetical about the very antithesis of poetry; to present the humbug and the materialist—and sympathetically, for that is one of the conditions of the problem—in a medium which presupposes sincerity and idealism as essentials,—such was the task Browning set himself in these studies. The failure was magnificent, but it was a failure; the pieces are rhetoric, ingenious and subtle rhetoric, not poetry in any sense of the term that regards its essence as well as its form.

Akin to these studies of *problematische Naturen*—‘humours’ Ben Jonson called them—is his portrait-gallery of historical celebrities, or rather obscurities, his *Parleyings with Certain People of Importance in their Day*, a title of one of his works that would cover a large section of them. It is characteristic of his method that his subjects are, in almost every case, nonentities. No literary artist who has had anything like his power of projecting himself into the past has refrained so rigidly from dealing with the great ones, the successes of

history. His interest is with the failures; why they failed, how often their seeming failure is the highest success, the battling of the brave but weak soul with the might of circumstance—these are the favourite themes of his historic imagination. Hence a somewhat exaggerated impression of the extent of his learning. By the very exigencies of the case his *dramatis personæ* had to be obscurities, and, owing to his intimate relations with Italy, these were mostly Italian obscurities, of whom Englishmen had no knowledge. Hence the impression, ‘If he knows the obscurities so well, how well must he know the greater lights of history!’ Put thus, one sees the *non sequitur*. He sought for the curiosities of history, and found them in volumes of memoirs, *causes célèbres*, and books like Wanley’s *Wonders of the Little World*. He revived in this one of the favourite topics of the Middle Ages, the *Fall of Princes*, the *Mirror for Magistrates*, and his portraits recall the *exempla* of the mediæval moralists and sermonisers. In this again he was on the search for dramatic situations, and he was chiefly interested in the pathos of disappointment.

It is here that his spiritual influence has been most profound. No English poet has felt like Browning the pathos of the battle of life. Yet keenly as he felt it, he did not

despair nor bid the world despair. 'We bid ye be of good hope' was his message to the seeming failures in life, a class of ever-growing importance in this self-conscious age. His philosophy of life was eminently manly, and has brought cheer to many a despairing soul. If we could condense it into a formula, the maxim would run, 'Aspiration is achievement.' Herein his philosophy approached closely one of the implicit assumptions of the worldly life. The man of the world regards every experience as such as a gain, apart from its moral implications. It is better to have sinned and lived than never to have lived at all—never, that is, to have developed one's own personality. Much of Browning's thought comes perilously near this, and is only redeemed from it by his acute sense of the mordant poignancy of the conscience-pang. On the whole, his influence is of the very highest kind in this part of his work. It acts as a moral tonic to be brought in contact with such a manly, cheery soul, that does not faintly trust the larger hope, but is confidently sure that in aiming at the highest we are doing the best for our best selves.

Nowhere is his influence higher in this regard than in his love poems, the highest test of a poet's powers. The world is right in thinking that the chief business of the

poet is to express love and to teach how to love. Browning's love poems are equally remarkable for their range and for their intensity. Nowhere in English literature does this passion of love burn higher or burn purer. The passion that pulsates through *In a Balcony* or *In a Gondola* is as intense as anything in Heine, and yet it is purged of all fleshly dross. Not by any sacrifice of body to spirit, nor by any lapse into sickly sentimentalism, does Browning reach this result. The claims of the whole being, body and spirit, are admitted to the utmost, and as a consequence those of the former die away in the serener glow of the spiritual passion. As Browning regarding the struggle of life—the contest of soul with soul or against all souls—is eminently a man, so in his depicting of love—the union of soul with soul—he is pre-eminently the gentleman. Refinement is of the very soul of him, and that without, as so often happens, any loss of virile strength. Here more than anywhere we trace the influence of his marriage, that ideal union of two equally gifted souls which is unique in the world's history. How abiding was this influence was shown but a few months before his death in the Fitzgerald incident. It was clear enough to the dispassionate observer that Fitzgerald was speaking of Mrs. Browning

the writer, not Mrs. Browning the woman. But Browning could be no dispassionate observer of the slightest aspersion on his wife, and in a spirit of almost boyish gallantry struck out on behalf of the wife who had been taken from his side more than a quarter of a century.

This is, perhaps, the place to treat of Browning's humour—a necessary side of a complete poetic nature, indeed of any complete man. Browning's gift in this direction was large, as witness the *Piper*, *The Two Poets of Croisic*, and the whole series of studies of humbugs and nonentities to which we have referred. But it is somewhat one-sided, allied to his interest in the pathetic, and thus somewhat grim. But it is never cynical, except when dealing with cynics; and though it is rarely hearty or a direct object of his art, it is always refined and manly. Mr. Ruskin, in a passage remarkable for its insight and for the quarter whence it comes, notices how inevitably the strongest English poetic force tends to degenerate into coarseness. Chaucer, Shakespeare, Dryden, Byron, are instances of what he means. Browning is the exception to the rule—he has the strength of these, but he has not their coarseness—and here again we probably have to thank the influence of the *Lyric Love*

that interpenetrated his whole being during the greater part of his life.

All the qualities we have been noticing—his virile strength, his humour, his refinement, his interest in the pathetic, the pureness and intensity of his passion, his interest in the obscurities of history, his fertility and many-sidedness, his eye for the dramatic situation, but want of the true dramatic instinct—all these qualities culminate in *The Ring and the Book*, his greatest work in point of size and in the sense it gives us of his sustained power. But the whole impression is one of power misdirected. Not to speak of the irritating *bizareries* of the advocates and of the fractions of Rome, the whole method of the book is anti-poetical. Poetic truth does not consist in displaying the facets of truth disconnectedly : the poet sees life singly and sees it whole, and should enable us so to see it. But if the experiment of trying to give the totality of truth by presenting its dislocated parts in small doses is a failure, what gigantic powers are displayed in the failure ! The Titan piles Pelion on Ossa, and if he fails to reach the all-commanding heights of Olympus, the massy pile remains as an enduring monument of his strength ; and the incidental successes on the way to the failure would be sufficient to found a dozen poetic

reputations. The contrast of Guido's two soliloquies, Pompilia's purity, the Pope's placid objectivity—these and a thousand other points betray the master's hand. It has been said that the whole concentrated energy of *Vanity Fair* finds a vent through Colonel Crawley's knuckles as he stretches the marquis at his wife's feet. So the whole pathos and tragedy of *The Ring and the Book* finds utterance in Guido's last words:—

Abate—Cardinal—Christ—Maria—God, . . .
Pompilia, will you let them murder me?

but the highest order of poet—one that controls his faculties instead of being controlled by them—would not have been led astray from such effects as these by over-refinements of intellectual subtlety.

There we reach the last quality of Browning's mind of which we need take explicit notice, and this intellectual subtlety is the disturbing element in his art. He is both too intellectual and too subtle. These are qualities the reverse of poetical. Not that a poet need be a fool or dense. But the things of the intellect must be subordinate to the purposes of his art, not objects of independent interest. The intellect analyses and abstracts, poetry synthesises and concretes. In consequence of Browning's interest in the

gambollings of the human intellect, and especially of his own intellect, much of his work reads like so many exercises in forensic dialectics. 'What a grand Q.C. the world has lost!' is our thought, but that is not a thought that a great poet should arouse. The Browningites, with the perverse ingenuity of the uncritical worshipper, lay stress upon this side of the poet's characteristics as if it were his most desirable quality. 'He is so subtle,' say they, and think they have thereby pronounced his greatest praise. Profound a poet should be, but hardly subtle. All art is at root selective; the poet's art consists in selecting out of the mass of thoughts and feelings which a poetic subject arouses in his soul those streams of thought and emotion that are essential to the subject. But Browning too often did not select, but gave, or attempted to give, the whole mass. The outcome has its interest—the interest of the riddle and the puzzle, which have their attraction for the uncultivated or the immature mind. But it is a vital mistake to confuse this interest, as the Browningites do, with the poetic effect which the poet *quâ* poet alone arrives at. 'How clever I am to have solved that!' is the feeling produced by the solution of the riddle. We have no quarrel with the feeling, but it is vastly different from the

proper ejaculation after being moved by the poet, 'How noble to have felt that!'

Akin to this is the error of placing in the forefront of his work the argumentative disquisitions on theological subjects, which form no inconsiderable portion of his poetical activity. There is no reason why a poet should not be a theologian; in these days, which have seen more theological disquisition than any period since the Council of Trent, there is every reason why a poet should share in such an absorbing interest of the audience he addresses. But he has not to display the processes of his thoughts on theology; he has only to give results in imaginative form. Browning has shown how to do this in *Rabbi ben Ezra*, but he has also shown us how not to do it in *La Saisiaz*. The poet may be—nay, he must be—very sure of God and of an eternal soul, but he is to convince us by his very sureness, not by process of reasoning.

We have now touched on all the sides of the poetic activity of Browning which need touching upon for the purpose of indicating the poetic force of the man, the large stores of spiritual energy which are contained in his works. But poetry has form as well as force, and we know but half of a poet's art when we have measured his poetic force. And in judging of Browning's poetic form

there can be no hesitation about the verdict. He was faulty in form almost always—faultless scarcely ever. Often, indeed, his choice of metre struck a false note from the start; he wrote argument in jerky trochaics, he expressed lyric emotion in blank verse. Such lapses in a man of sure touch in matters of this sort point to some inherent defect in the poet's method. Worse even than this was the over-subtlety of intellect to which we have already referred, and which is at the root of his so-called obscurity. He attempted not only to give the emotive iridescence of the poetic afflatus, but also at the same time to suggest the accompanying inrush of clustering thoughts. The psychology of the poetic afflatus is obscure, but one thing is at least certain about it. Under the inrush of the emotive impulse the poet remains master of his passion, directing it into artistic channels. Browning had this power to the highest, and misused it. He attempted the impossible task of setting forth in verse the totality of impressions, emotional, æsthetic, and intellectual, which his object made upon him. When one reflects on what the totality of impressions on such a nature as Browning's must mean, one recognises the impossibility of the task. To make even an approach to it he had to write in a kind of lyric shorthand,

and his sentences become congested with suggestion. Hence their stimulating effect, but it is not a poetical one. The poet's art consists in selecting one particular order of impressions out of the totality which 'inspires' him. To attempt to give the whole is, we will not say inartistic, but extra-artistic. The poetic influence is diffracted and dispersed among the conflicting orders of interest that are aroused. It is much the same effect, to use a homely illustration, as is produced by the attempt to watch Barnum's five performances all at once. Only one art is capable of producing unity amid such complexity; not poetry, but music, was the art in which Browning's method was possible. His whole conception of poetic form was consequently false, and goes far to mar the greatest poetic force England has seen for centuries. Perhaps the secret of the matter was that his imagination was less intense than that of most poets of anything like his power. With them the vivid mental picture enables them to concentrate attention on it, and to inhibit, as the psychologists say, the crowd of surging thoughts that accompany it. That Browning had less of this visual insight than most poets is shown by the comparative infrequency of descriptive passages as well as by a certain lack of minute observation of

externals. His insight was into the soul of things. His translations from the Greek brought out his imperfect form in a most instructive way. While he reproduced their spirit very effectually, he was hopelessly inadequate in representing their form. It was as if Greek temples had been transformed into Gothic cathedrals. The sense of rugged power is always with us, rarely or never the impression of god-like grace. He was of the Titans, not of the Gods.

Standing by his open grave, we give the last thought to the man we have lost as well as the poet. His warm geniality made him a universal favourite in society. If to some it seems incongruous to think of the *vates sacer* at the five o'clock tea-table, it must be remembered that the spiritual influence of such a nature would radiate through the very class that needs idealising. With him has gone a spiritual force of the first magnitude. The firm friend, the free giver, the sympathiser in all the higher forms of the nation's life, the inspirer of painting, music, and the higher criticism — all these are gone in Robert Browning the man. And notwithstanding all deductions of faulty form, of infelicitous choice of subject and medium, a large body of work remains of Browning the poet in which these imperfections were reduced to a

minimum. If aspiration were indeed achievement, Robert Browning would have been the greatest name in the roll of English poets; and even as it is, his work will rank among the greatest spiritual forces of England.

JOHN HENRY NEWMAN

August 11, 1890

CARDINAL NEWMAN



A GREAT leader of men, an influential ecclesiastic, a man of saintly life, a spiritual force of great power, a master of English prose, has passed away from us with John Henry Newman. To modern England he has been as one of the dead from the night Father Dominic, the Passionist, passed over his threshold at Littlemore, and he has himself written the biography of that dead self in one of the masterpieces of English literature. What Father Newman did in life and letters is of quite subordinate interest to the spiritual career of the Fellow of Oriel, who exercised so much influence on the Church of England and might have exercised more. It is only so far as that career has affected the inner life of England and its manifestations in English letters that it can be considered in this place.

It seems almost a paradox to say of the author of forty volumes that his true sphere was in action, not thought or literature. Yet it is a paradox that contains more than the

usual fraction of truth. He was born to lead men; the very modesty that caused him at times to deny this concealed his dissatisfaction even with the enormous mastery over men's souls and fates that he wielded for so many years. It was by personal intercourse that he sought to move the world, and did move it. The tenacity with which he clung to old friendships was significant of much. His whole life was a sermon, the text of which might well be the title of his epoch-making discourse, *Personal Intercourse the Means of Propagating the Truth*—the sermon that really started the Tractarian Movement, and not Keble's on National Apostasy. Throughout his Anglican period the ecclesiastical things which touched him most nearly were not things of dogma, but lay in the sphere of almost practical politics. At every point of his career it was some problem in the relations of Church and State that affected him most strongly. The abolition of the Irish bishoprics, the miserable muddle of the Jerusalem bishopric, the alliance of O'Connell and the Whigs—these things, and things like these, are the turning-points of his career. Even the diplomatic reserve and 'economy of truth' with which the world credited him for so many years were marks of the ecclesiastical statesman, not of the religious thinker.

It bears out this classification of him as a man of action, not of thought, that almost every one of the forty volumes of which we have spoken is what might be termed occasional. His sermons, fine as they are, are occasional on the face of them. 'Tract No. xc.' is a tract for immediate consumption. The magnificent *Apologia* is but a pamphlet writ large. His *Verses* are, as their title-page informs us, 'on Various Occasions.' Even when he engaged in works that might seem to imply a purely theoretic interest, like his *Essay on Development*, they were written with a practical aim, even though it were a personal one—of working the subject out to 'quiet him,' as he said, somewhat after the principle of *κάθαρσις*, familiar to the Greeks and to Goethe. His was not the writer's nature that is irresistibly impelled to writing and thinking for their own sakes. He thought, he wrote, that he might influence the actions of men. He did influence their actions, but, as a consequence, most of what he wrote has in reality died away with its practical effect, and of his forty volumes but a few sermons, 'Lead, kindly Light'—the one hymn of our language—the *Apologia*, and perhaps *The Idea of a University*, will form permanent additions to English literature. His histories are unhistorical, his criticism

uncritical, and much of his theology is founded on his history and his criticism. His *Arians* and his *Via Media*, his *Anglican Difficulties*, even his *Grammar of Assent*, have mainly a personal interest to commend them.

And yet what literary powers were those that thus seem to have been squandered away on temporary objects! Bizarre as his reasoning seemed to most of us, how subtly he weaved the web of it! Dealing for the most part with subjects remote from human interest, he would so order his argument that it would have the attraction of a plot for us. Topics that seemed forbidding both for their theological technicalities and their repulse of reason were presented by him with such skill that they appeared as inevitable as Euclid and as attractive as Plato. All the resources of a master of English style—except, perhaps, one, description—were at his command; pure diction, clear arrangement, irony, dignity, a copious command of words combined with a reserve in the use of them—all these qualities went to make up the charm of Newman's style, the finest flower that the earlier system of a purely classical education has produced. It is curious, by the way, that the only two men of our time who have written on theology and possessed a style, Dr. Martineau and Newman, have had

Huguenot blood in their veins. And with Newman all this was informed with the attraction of a personality so rare and a nature so rich that the appeal is irresistible even to those who care little for his topics.

Yes, that was an exceptionally rich nature which has just been removed from the world. He moved many men, because he had within him the making of many men. He had points of contact with nearly all the currents of thought and feeling which were to transform the higher England in Queen Victoria's reign. That revolt of his against 'Liberalism,' as he called it, was prophetic of nearly all the deeper movements of our time. The resort to history for spiritual nourishment, which led him from the Evangelicalism of Simeon to Rome herself, has become a source of inspiration for the higher politics and economics of our time. There was something, too, of the romantic temper in him—that return to the mystic glow and imaginative colouring of the Middle Ages that has done so much for our literature and our art. Even the method of evolution appears to have operated on Newman's mind in the doctrine of development that finally led him to Rome. And that absorbing interest of Newman in dogmatic theology was but a foreshadowing of what has befallen most of England's higher minds

during the past half-century, even when it has led them to agnosticism. England is the only European country that cares for theology, say continental observers, and its passionate interest in theology begins in this century with the movement with which Newman's name will for ever be connected. Even the rise of the interest in art and music seems to be foreshadowed in Newman's own personal fondness for them. Newmanism, as we may call it, included all these things, and thus touched the national life in the early decades of Queen Victoria's reign in far more points than might seem at first sight to be the case.

But it was chiefly and mainly in his passion for theology that he came nearest to the higher strivings of his countrymen. In no one of his time was manifested more strongly the wish to believe which some of his disciples have ranked so high above the desire to know. His whole life was dominated by this wish, and it is this that gives such dramatic unity to the *Apologia*. No other autobiography—certainly not that of St. Augustine, its nearest prototype in literature—is so intensely theological. It is not the life of a man we read, it is the drama of a soul, and of a soul entirely occupied with the relations of itself to God. Surely few men have always lived their life so completely in the

great Taskmaster's eye. He seems to have ever lived in the spirit of that childish fancy of his, that the men around him were angels disguised in human form—in other words, that God and he were the only noumenal realities of the world. It was characteristic of his whole tone of thought that in dealing with what seemed to be a purely logical problem in his *Grammar of Assent*, he postulated a new sense—the Illative Sense—clearly for the one purpose of giving validity to faith. Logician as he was, he subordinated here, as elsewhere, the claims of logic to the claims of theology.

What was it, then, that caused 'Newmanism' to be ultimately ineffective and led Newman further and further away from the main currents of English thought and feeling? All these rich forces of his spiritual nature were tyrannised over by a subtle intellect and a passion for logical consequence which is furthest removed from English habits of mind, and may, perhaps, be traced to his Huguenot mother, as it has been equally exemplified, though in an opposite direction, by Professor Newman, the Cardinal's brother. No Frenchman could be more consequent in following logic to an absurdity than Newman. Now English institutions, whether of State or Church, are founded on compromise, or

the renunciation of logical consistency. Hence the aloofness of Newman from the practical course of English politics, ecclesiastical or constitutional. There is something foreign about his whole tone of thinking, which has found a natural and logical outcome in his death as a cardinal of the Roman Church. The same attitude of mind accounts for his deficiency in the essentially English feeling of humour, which is intimately connected with the spirit of compromise. Irony he possessed in all its efficacy, but the attempts at humour in his so-called novels, *Loss and Gain* and *Callista*, are strained in the extreme.

How comes it, then, that Newman, of all men in the world, with his hatred of compromise and thirst after logicity, should have ever thought to find rest in a *via media*, a compromise among compromises? There comes in another quality of his mind, which is equally un-English outside the particular profession for which it is appropriate. In reckoning up the formative influences on his character, something should be said of the legal tone which was given to it in early years by the fact that he was intended for the Bar. There is a curious touch of the man of the world in much that was done and said by the author of the *Dream of Gerontius*. In much

of his dialectic there is a subtlety of distinction which recalls the legal quibble, and at times even the legal fiction. It was a crude feeling of this that caused Kingsley to ask his famous question, 'What, then, does Dr. Newman mean?' to which he obtained so crushing a reply. To the Philistine truth is a matter of yea or nay; there is no place for subtle gradations of meaning and reference. Kingsley was, with all his powers, something of a Philistine, and required this sharpness of outline in what we may term truths of the emotions. Newman easily overthrew the contention, but the very subtleties which he had to introduce into his defence, in all parts of it that were not merely personal, gave the British public an uneasy feeling that there was some justification for Kingsley's general position. Newman amply vindicated his own personal veracity, but he was scarcely so successful in removing all suspicion of what is euphemistically termed 'economy of truth' in the practice of the Church he had joined, and in his own method of dealing with theological problems. It was the *nisi prius* tone that left this impression, and it was generally this legal and quibbling tone in the treatment of religious topics that helped to undermine Newman's influence from the time of the appearance of 'Tract No. xc.'

It was, too, this *nisi prius* attitude that enabled Newman to believe as long as he did in his *via media*. It is impossible even at this distance of time to explain with any clearness the subtle distinctions which in Newman's mind differentiated the Anglican Church, as the *via media*, from the Roman Catholic Church. The distinctions he makes are exactly of the legal kind. There was no room in his mind for what Englishmen would call the common-sense method of solving the difficulties his own subtleties had raised. He never to the last faced the plain fact that the Roman Catholic Church no longer occupies the position of the Church of the fifth century or of the fifteenth. That Church is so far removed from the tone and feeling of the modern world that it is impossible to consider conversion to its fold anything but *il gran rifiuto* of these latter days—a renunciation of all the privileges the modern mind holds dear; and, to do it justice, the Roman Church fully recognises the fact. But it remains that Newman did make the renunciation, and thereby declared his antipathy to the modern ideals. They who hold to those ideals may admire Newman, but they must condemn his renunciation of reason and its claims.

He had the head of a lawyer, we have said, but it should be added that he had the heart

of a saint. The saintly life has never been more faithfully followed than by John Henry Newman. It is due to his life more than to his doctrines or his presentation of them that so marked a change of public opinion has occurred about Newman and about his Church. After all, men judge creeds by the characters they produce rather than by the logical consistency of their doctrines. That the pendulum of public opinion about Roman Catholics in England has swung back from violent antipathy to sympathetic admiration is due in large measure to the saintly life of John Henry Newman.

HUTTON'S 'NEWMAN'*



R. HUTTON opens yet another new series by a biographical essay on Cardinal Newman, which seems likely to be the first of many biographies of the late Cardinal.

It is but fair to Mr. Hutton to add at once that it was prepared during Newman's lifetime, and has not been hurriedly written to supply a demand caused by the Cardinal's death. It is far from a biography in the ordinary sense of the word; of the man apart from the theologian we hear but little. Mr. Hutton has essayed to give a short history of Newman's religious opinions while he was in the Anglican Church, derived in the main from the *Apologia*, but told from a point of view necessarily less personal, and therefore more impartial.

In many ways the essay is successful in giving the reader the main critical points in that remarkable transition from the extreme left to the extreme right of Christian thought.

Mr. Hutton's abstracts are clear, and his

* *English Leaders of Religion.—Cardinal Newman.*
By R. H. Hutton. (Methuen & Co.)

criticisms judicious, if not profound. Yet somehow the total impression left is not a very decided one, owing, perhaps, to the absence of any summary of the main lines of development which led from Newman the Evangelical to Newman the Cardinal. The stages are clear, and have been discriminated once for all by Newman himself in the *Apologia*. It was difficult, if not impossible, for any one coming after Newman to improve on that statement, or amend it in any way. The chief merit Mr. Hutton's treatment can claim is that of conciseness.

The main lines of that development are familiar enough by this time to all who have read Newman's masterpiece. How the intense Evangelicalism of his boyish years was gradually dissolved and replaced by an equally intense conception of the authority of the Church, and how this led logically on to the momentous question, 'Which is the true Church?' how this was answered at first with the old high and dry Churchmen, and then, as the Erastianism of the Anglican Church as then constituted became clear, how the need of Church reform or reformation became apparent, and so the *via media* was devised as the ideal towards which the new reformation should travel—all this is something we have all known since 1864, if,

indeed, it was not known earlier. Mr. Hutton has now and again a comment on the facts or the views, or he contests the contentions of the Tractarians on various points, but as a rule he tells again the twice told tale, with clearness, indeed, but without much force.

It is only when he comes to the culminating episode—the composition of the *Essay on Development*—that Mr. Hutton offers much that is fresh or throws light on the matter in hand. The chapter devoted to this remarkable book is a closely written piece of analysis interwoven with comment that does credit to Mr. Hutton. He makes too much, perhaps, of the anticipation of Darwinism involved in such a treatment of doctrine. The idea was in the air at the time. Chambers's *Vestiges of Creation*, which appeared just then, was only the popularisation of much evolutionary speculation that was going on around Newman as he was writing his essay on the relation of doctrinal evolution and truth, for that is his main subject. What are the signs that show which doctrinal changes are development and which degeneration? That is the problem which Newman set himself to solve in the last year of his life as an Anglican. We all know the answer that he practically gave to the question, but it is of interest

to have presented to us so clear a summary of the main points which led Newman to seek the true Church in Rome alone, and not, as heretofore, in the ideal Middle Way which he and his school were to make dominant in the Anglican Church.

The seven marks of true development were to be found in the Roman Church, and in the Roman Church alone, and therefore Newman joined that communion. The remarkable thing about all this is the intensely theological tone of the whole procedure—theological as opposed to religious. Mr. Hutton has a whole chapter devoted to a defence of Newman from the charge of being secretly infidel or sceptical. But to any one who reads a page of his writings it is abundantly clear that Newman never came within the region where doubt or infidelity exists. His whole attitude towards faith is a proof of this. He never needed a foundation for his faith, for the faith itself was a presumption in favour of the facts or feelings that were to prove the faith. This is perhaps not altogether a fair way of stating the case; but Newman is consistent throughout in declaring that faith itself is the most effectual way of removing the difficulties that attend faith, nowadays most of all, but that have attended it at all times in the world's history.

Indeed, this utter absence of any scepticism

as to the fundamental principles of revealed religion is implied in such a treatment of theology as was adopted in Newman's writings both while he was within and after he had left the Anglican Church. It is to him the *scientia scientiarum*, a kind of deductive science analogous to geometry, starting, like it, with definitions, and assuming, like it, a number of axioms. This conception at once leads on to sacerdotalism, as it is obvious that the knowledge of such a technical science and its application to practice can only be safely intrusted to experts. Hence the opposition of the Tractarians to Protestantism, which from this point of view represents the claim of the common man to understand and apply a highly technical science.

When we combine with this confidence in the capacity of a dogmatic theology to solve the difficulties of life an intense feeling of the historic continuity of the race we have the *idées mères* of Newman's position throughout his career. The conception of the unity of history is implied in all Newman's work, and is the foundation of his conception of religious development that led him ultimately to Rome. Simultaneously almost with Hegel's philosophy of history Newman applied the conception of evolution to man's spiritual nature, before Spencer, Darwin, and Wallace

had applied the same ruling idea to organic nature. That this should have led him and his school to Rome is easily comprehensible now, but Newman's history in the Anglican Church was a bold attempt to claim for her the same privileges as the Church of Rome in this respect.

Mr. Hutton rests his claim for Newman's greatness on the persistency with which he applied himself to the working out in full detail of his main conceptions in theology, and on the greatness of the powers which, as Mr. Hutton intimates, he sacrificed to those objects. He might have been, it is argued, a great poet or a great literary artist in prose, and he gave this up in order to save the Church of England and to devote his whole energies to theology. It is very doubtful, we think, whether Newman would have become a great poet in any other way than he did, as a hymn-writer and as the author of *The Dream of Gerontius*. It is, again, somewhat difficult to guess in what direction but the theological Newman's exquisite prose, which at times became over-florid in his Romish works, could have been effective. He had few of the qualities that make the great historian, his literary essays are not even readable nowadays, and his so-called novels are only of interest in their theological bear-

ing. Newman's whole mind and spiritual feeling were against the whole position of modern research—he could not bear not to know.

Mr. Hutton is basing his hero's claim on a false issue. Newman's claim to greatness does not lie in any deliberate sacrifice of problematic powers for the sake of theological science. He deserves the name of great because in an age of materialism and superficial intellectualism he held aloft the banner of spiritualism, because amidst all obloquy and insult he held to what he considered the truth, because he yielded up the proud position of a great spiritual leader to follow the inward summons. He has been one of the operative forces that have aided to transform England. It is for this reason he has been honoured and mourned by Englishmen of all creeds, quite apart from the merits and demerits of the theology to which he devoted his saintly life.

‘LETTERS,’ ETC.*



FTER a great man's death the floodgates of biography are opened. First come the press memoirs, often running to the length of monographs, then the magazine articles and the popular lives, and the climax is reached by the official biography; itself, perhaps, to be followed by rival lives, or at least popular summaries. This familiar process is clearly being followed in the case of Newman, and we are now in the midst of the first onrush of the waters. The three books under notice include the first instalment of the official biography, dealing with Newman's life as an Anglican, Mr. Fletcher's popular life, and a revised reprint of Mr. Meynell's excellent magazine articles. The two latter are written from a Roman Catholic point of view, the first from that of an Anglican, and thus

* *Letters and Correspondence of John Henry Newman.* Edited by Anne Mozley, 2 vols. (Longmans & Co.)

A Short Life of Cardinal Newman. By J. S. Fletcher. (Ward & Downey.)

John Henry Newman. By W. Meynell. (Kegan Paul & Co.)

together they cover the whole development of Newman's career.

It will always be impossible, as it will be unnecessary, to write or rewrite Newman's life as an Anglican. The *Apologia* stands in the way, in which he himself wrote his early life once and for all time. True, it is only the 'History of his Religious Opinions.' But with Newman, more, perhaps, than with any other man, his religious opinions were his life. Certainly Miss Mozley's work does not profess to retell the story of the *Apologia*. Her volumes are, in fact, a huge appendix to that work, containing the *pièces justificatives* for it. They are full of materials, but these do not explain themselves, and at every turn have reference to the events spoken of in the *Apologia*.

In large measure this supplement to Newman's religious autobiography is the work of Newman himself. He has throughout the two volumes edited the letters and added explanatory words and notes, which often read very oddly, interspersed as they are in the midst of the text. Indeed, it seems probable, from the date attached to many of these annotations,—1860,—that something like the present collection was intended to do the work that the *Apologia* itself did so efficiently. If that be so, the world owes a large debt of

gratitude to Kingsley for having provoked the more artistic presentation of the facts. It would be quite safe to prophesy, if one can prophesy about past events, that Newman's name would have far different associations with it if these volumes, or volumes similar to them, had taken the place of the *Apologia*. While nearly every line of that masterpiece is of entrancing interest, there is scarcely a single page in these two bulky volumes which anybody would care to read again for its own sake. Part of this unreadableness is due to the want of explanatory and connecting matter. There is not even a list of the celebrated Tracts. The second volume in particular, which is entirely devoted to the ‘Movement,’ is in the main a collection of business letters, the business being of a highly ideal character no doubt, but still its details are in large measure of the character of machinery. Whether intentionally or no, almost everything of human interest has been eliminated from these pages, which are filled throughout with controversial and theological details, with scarcely any reference to the feelings and aspirations of the workers in the ‘Movement.’

These volumes, then, must be regarded as a supplement to the *Apologia*, and their direct interest is the additional light they throw on its pages. The main increase of knowledge

about Newman's life consists of an autobiographical memoir running to some seventy-six pages, and bringing his life-history up to the summer of 1832, the year preceding the beginnings of the 'Movement.' This is, unfortunately, written in oblique narration, and thus loses much of its vividness. Take, for instance, the following passage:—

'The Provost's butler—to whom it fell by
' usage to take the news to the fortunate
' candidate—made his way to Mr. Newman's
' lodgings in Broad Street, and found him
' playing the violin. This in itself disconcerted
' the messenger, who did not associate such an
' accomplishment with a candidateship for the
' Oriel Common-Room; but his perplexity was
' increased when, on his delivering what may
' be supposed to have been his usual form
' of speech on such occasions, that "he had,
' he feared, disagreeable news to announce, viz.
' that Mr. Newman was elected Fellow of Oriel,
' and that his immediate presence was re-
' quired there," the person addressed, thinking
' that such language savoured of impertinent
' familiarity, merely answered, "Very well,"
' and went on fiddling. This led the man to
' ask whether, perhaps, he had mistaken the
' rooms and gone to the wrong person, to
' which Mr. Newman replied that it was all
' right. But, as may be imagined, no sooner

‘ had the man left, than he flung down his
 ‘ instrument, and dashed downstairs with all
 ‘ speed to Oriel College. And he recollected,
 ‘ after fifty years, the eloquent faces and eager
 ‘ bows of the tradesmen and others whom he
 ‘ met on his way, who had heard the news,
 ‘ and well understood why he was crossing
 ‘ from St. Mary’s to the lane opposite at so
 ‘ extraordinary a pace.’

If the reader will translate this back into *I’s*, *my’s*, and *me’s*, the gain of vividness will be apparent. It is a pity that Miss Mozley did not induce the Cardinal to reconsider his choice of form for this autobiographical fragment. The gain such a narration receives from being put in the first person may be illustrated by the following letter embedded in the memoir :—

‘ On Wednesday, April 29, about breakfast-
 ‘ time, Mr. Wilson and Mr. Short called for
 ‘ me, and asked me whether I intended to
 ‘ stand for the scholarship. I answered that
 ‘ I intended next year. However, they
 ‘ wished me to stand this year, because they
 ‘ would wish to see me on the foundation. I
 ‘ said I would think of it. I wrote home that
 ‘ day. How often was my pen going to tell
 ‘ the secret ! but I determined to surprise you.
 ‘ I told you in a letter written in the midst of
 ‘ the examination that there were five [candi-

‘ dates] of our own [men]; did you suspect
‘ that I was one of the five? A Worcester man
‘ was very near getting it. They made me
‘ first do some verses; then Latin translation;
‘ then Latin theme; then chorus of Euripides;
‘ then an English theme; then some Plato;
‘ then some Lucretius; then some Xenophon;
‘ then some Livy. What is more distressing
‘ than suspense? At last I was called to the
‘ place where they had been voting; the Vice-
‘ Chancellor [the President] said some Latin
‘ over me; then made a speech. The electors
‘ then shook hands with me, and I immediately
‘ assumed the scholar’s gown. First, as I was
‘ going out, before I had changed my gown,
‘ one of the candidates met me and wanted to
‘ know if it was decided. What was I to say?
‘ “It was.” “And who has got it?” “Oh,
‘ an in-college man,” I said; and I hurried
‘ away as fast as I could. On returning with
‘ my newly-earned gown, I met the whole set
‘ going to their respective homes. I did not
‘ know what to do; I held my eyes down. By
‘ this I am a scholar for nine years at £60 a
‘ year. In which time, if there be no Fellow
‘ of my county (among the Fellows), I may be
‘ elected Fellow, as a regular thing, for five
‘ years without taking orders.’

These four autobiographical chapters and
the accompanying inter-chapters in which Miss

Mozley has given supplementary documents form the most important addition to our knowledge of Newman and his career contained in these volumes. They tell us of his early home and education. They give interesting details like that just given of his college career. Above all, they display him in a more secular aspect, so to speak, than we are accustomed to regard him. As he himself informs us, it was only on his election to the Oriel Fellowship in 1822 that the possibility of a theological career occurred to him. Besides this they give glimpses of the charming character of his sister, Mary, whose loss affected him so deeply. The fragments of her letters have a girlish charm that lightens the somewhat gloomy and austere tone of the book, so rarely relieved by touches of humour from Newman or his correspondents, the only exceptions being Keble and Hurrell Froude.

A large part of the first volume is taken up by Newman's impressions during his grand tour with the Froudes in 1832-33. Much of this is not of extraordinary interest, and might have been well omitted. Yet it is quite true—and this is one of the main points brought out in this work—that the solitary travel in Sicily and the fever that overtook him there formed the crisis in Newman's life. His escape from death might easily seem miraculous and

a special sign of grace to so ardent a believer. But for the untiring attention of his courier, Gennaro, his life would have paid the penalty of a somewhat hazardous exploit. His feeling of special mission was intensified by the narrow escape from death.

The celebrated hymn 'Lead, kindly Light,' turns out to be the exact expression of the deep feelings aroused by his Sicilian experience; it was written, as is well known, on his voyage to Marseilles during his convalescence. Almost every expression has a personal reference: 'I am far from home,' 'those angel faces' (his father and sister Mary), 'Pride ruled my will' referred to the strong feeling Newman had that his Sicilian illness was a punishment for his self-will. Even 'the moor and fen, crag and torrent,' were probably the reflex of the deep impression Sicilian scenery had made upon him. If one could generalise from a single example—and one often does so generalise in the first instance—it might seem that the popular effect of a poem depends on the intensity of personal feeling with which it is written. A poem's impressiveness, one might say, depends on the number of heart's drops instilled into it.

On this Sicilian illness there is a remarkable paper of Newman's in this volume which is almost morbid in the detail with which it

enters into each phase of the fever. Incidentally it contains a piece of self-portraiture, which is perhaps, taking all things together, the most striking thing in these volumes :—

‘ Indeed, this is how I look on myself ; very much (as the illustration goes) as a pane of glass, which transmits heat, being cold itself. I have a vivid perception of the consequences of certain admitted principles, have a considerable intellectual capacity of drawing them out, have the refinement to admire them, and a rhetorical or histrionic power to represent them ; and, having no great (*i.e.* no vivid) love of this world, whether riches, honours, or anything else, and some firmness and natural dignity of character, take the profession of them upon me, as I might sing a tune which I liked—loving the Truth, but not possessing it, for I believe myself at heart to be nearly hollow, *i.e.* with little love, little self-denial. I believe I have some faith, that is all ; and, as to my sins, they need my possessing no little amount of faith to set against them and gain their remission. By-the-bye, this statement will account for it, how I can preach the Truth without thinking much of myself.’

It must be remembered that this was written in a moment of self-depreciation, sincere enough, but rather tending to exaggerate demerits and failings. But external evidence

and the general impression made by Newman on his contemporaries show that these lines are more truthful than such self-portraiture usually is. With regard to his coolness there is a confirmatory passage in a letter in the second volume, where he describes in an amusing way his meeting Arnold—the chief representative of ‘ Liberalism ’ in the Church—in the Oriel Common-Room :—

‘ I was most absolutely cool, or rather calm
‘ and unconcerned, all through the meeting
‘ from beginning to end ; but I don’t know
‘ whether you have seen me enough in such
‘ situations to know (what I really believe is
‘ not any affectation at all on my part ; I am
‘ not at all conscious of any such thing, though
‘ people would think it) that I seem, if you
‘ will let me say it, to *put on* a very simple,
‘ innocent, and modest manner. I sometimes
‘ laugh at myself, and at the absurdities which
‘ result from it ; but really I cannot help it,
‘ and I really do believe it to be genuine. On
‘ one occasion in the course of our conversation
‘ I actually blushed high at some mistake I
‘ made, and yet on the whole I am quite
‘ collected. Now, are you not amused at all
‘ this ? or ought not I to blush now ? I never
‘ said a word of all this about myself to any
‘ one in my life before ; though, perhaps, that
‘ does not mend the matter that I should say
‘ it now.’

Both passages concur in giving an impression of cool dispassionateness that contrasts with some of the impassioned language he used in self-defence against Kingsley and in his newspaper letters. Both Mr. Fletcher and Mr. Meynell remark that this passion was simulated and calculated on the part of Newman, who defended it on the plausible ground that the British public will never believe a man is in earnest unless he loses, or seems to lose, his temper.

The end of the first volume and the whole of the second are entirely taken up with letters and documents relating to the ‘Movement’ which gave new life to the Anglican Church, and led the leader of it to the Roman fold. It clearly forms the raw material—the very raw material—out of which Newman drew up his own lucid account, and it affords explicit information on every phase and divagation of Tractarianism in its formative period. But its very minuteness renders it practically unreadable; there is little or no connecting narrative—only a few ‘Chronological Notes’ of Newman’s which assume in the reader a minute acquaintance with every turn of events in the long struggle. It thus affords a mine of evidence for the Oxford Movement, but its riches have to be dug for, and it is only to be used as a supplement to the *Apologia* or to a book like that of Dean Church.

That these documents should confirm the *Apologia* is comprehensible enough, for they were mostly in Newman's hands when he wrote it, and have practically been edited by him before now being given to the world. Here and there we catch a glimpse of editorial motive: thus the note on vol. i. p. 476, 'First mention of Pusey's name,' and the entries from Newman's *Journal*, vol. ii. p. 24, giving details of Pusey's movements, were clearly intended to dissociate Pusey's name from the 'Movement.' Yet it remains to be proved whether the impetus and force given to it by Pusey's social position were not vital to the development of the 'Movement.' As Mr. Meynell points out, it was Newman's family connections, or rather want of them, that threw the direction of the 'Movement' into Pusey's hands, and gave rise to the popular epithet 'Puseyite.' These are, however, almost the only instances of pettiness to be observed in these volumes, unless the reference to Golightly, vol. i. p. 165 ('he is better to know than to see'), can be regarded as such. But the intense minuteness in personal details shows an amount of self-will and self-opinion in Newman which is extraordinary in a man of such genuine modesty.

The total impression given by the details of the 'Movement' confirms the general idea

that has long been current. It was an attempt to transfer the seriousness of Evangelicalism to the side of the High Church. In a significant passage (vol. i. p. 277) Golithly declared that the only young men in whom there was true seriousness were Calvinistic in tone. Newman had been trained Calvinistically, and was thus adapted by his training to make the required transition from the Low to the High Church. As early as 1830 T. Mozley recognised his suitability as leader of such a movement. Theologically and technically speaking, Newman and his followers made earnest, as the Germans say, with the conception of the Apostolical Succession and all that it implies: ‘Apostolical,’ indeed, becomes a cant word in these letters to indicate the aims of the party. Newman was thus, in Heine’s phrase, though not in Heine’s sense, a Knight of the Holy Ghost, and valiantly he fought the fight of the Faith.

Towards the end of the second volume Newman’s development had reached a stage when Rome loomed in the distance as the inevitable goal of his theological thinking. It will come as a surprise to most people that this stage was reached much earlier than the final step would lead one to imagine. At first, indeed, he was unconscious of the direction of his steps; he did not know where

he was leading his followers, because he did not know how far he was going himself. So far he could honestly deny the imputation that he was a Romanist in disguise while seemingly fighting for a *via media* between Anglicanism and Romanism. But it appears from a touching series of letters between his sister and himself that he was practically a Romanist in disguise for some years—probably as many as four—before he took the final step. It is curious that his consciousness of being drawn towards Rome should have coincided in point of time with the rejection by the Anglican Church, and to a certain extent by his own party, of the doctrines of ‘Tract No. xc.’ Here again we seem to have glimpses of quasi-personal motives in what appear to be doctrinal developments that clash with our preconceived notions of his humility and disinterestedness in the highest sense of the word.

There is one thing that comes out in these letters that is explanatory of much. He was a theologian, or rather a theological thinker, but he was not, comparatively speaking, a theological scholar in the sense in which we can apply that term to Döllinger or even to Pusey. It is curious to find a thinker who laid such absolute stress on authority in the living Church, and on development in the

Church of the past, knowing so little about the actual facts of that development. Historical criticism in the field of theology was not born in his time, above all in England, and there is an utter absence of any appeal to it in these volumes.

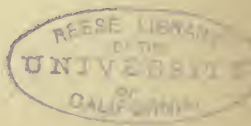
Altogether these letters do not impress one with very high ideas of the intellect of the Tractarians. They all seem too deeply immersed in the practical details of their schemes. There is scarcely any discussion of principles, or even any distinct consciousness of the principles to be fought for. Resistance to 'Liberalism' in its inroads on the Church is a more prominent motive, it would seem, than any distinct conception of the ideals which they desired to realise. Even in Newman there is too much immersion in detail, and there is far too little of humanism in his letters to make them interesting. It is the 'Movement,' the 'Movement,' and still again the 'Movement.' Of life, of art, except stray references to music, of letters, there is scarcely anything throughout these thousand pages. It is possible that this was designed by the editor and by the Cardinal, but the result has been to make these volumes terribly technical and monotonous.

The two remaining books on our list deal more fully with the Cardinal's Catholic life.

In one way this was a failure, his Cardinal-deaconship being a somewhat empty honour, and he never acquired any real influence in his adopted Church, such as has been wielded by the rival English Cardinal. It is, indeed, curious to reflect that Newman's theological thoughts on the necessary development of religious truth should have led him into the fold of the Church which practically negatives the possibility of such development. There is clearly no field in her economy for the theological thinker; the Pope's infallibility renders such efforts nugatory. On the other hand, it must be remembered that the late Cardinal's work as a literary artist was mainly performed in his Catholic period. His novels, the *Dream of Gerontius*, the *Idea of a University*, the *Grammar of Assent*, even the *Apologia* itself, were all products of his Catholic period. Except the *Lyra* and the sermons—but what an exception is there!—the chief works by which he will be remembered were written within the Church of his adoption. And his life in that Church, when it comes to be told, must surely be more full of human and natural interest than the somewhat morbid and gloomy period that closed in 1845.

ALFRED TENNYSON

October 6, 1892



ALFRED TENNYSON

 HE greatest poetic artist of the English-speaking race has passed away. There need be no sadness of farewell at such a close to such a career. To have passed a long life in undivided devotion to the noblest of the arts, to have grown in mastery of it almost to the end, to have become in very deed the voice of the nation he loved so well: this has been surely the supreme lot. It is characteristic that almost the only trouble of his later years was the intrusive reverence of his fellow-countrymen, a burden that might have been borne with somewhat more of patience and geniality. But there was a touch of the aristocrat about Tennyson that chimed in well with the dignity of his art, and completes the picture of the *vates sacer*, the consecrated voice of a mighty people, brooding in self-chosen isolation upon the things of highest import.

That is not the figure which Tennyson pre-

sents on his first appearance in the arena where he was to outstrip all rivals. His *Keepsake* period lasted long. Looking back, we can indeed discern in the volume of 1842—in the *Ulysses*, in the *Morte d'Arthur*, in *The Two Voices*—the promise of nearly all that was to come. But these were imbedded in much that was pretty but petty, Wordsworthian idylls too long drawn out, *Lords of Burleigh* and *Ladies Clare*, that half justified the early scoffers, Wilson and the rest. Even the melody, though sweet and clear, was thin and at times tinkling. Grace, not force or dignity, was the characteristic up to and including *The Princess* of 1847, the most graceful poem of such length in the language. *The Rape of the Lock*, the only other poem in English literature that can be compared with it, is more witty than graceful.

Yet all the while the master was growing in command over his instrument. Even in the earlier volumes of 1830 and 1832 there were premonitions of the almost flawless workmanship in words which was to be the *cachet* of Tennyson's style. They say that men's minds ossify after forty. Certainly there comes to languages growing old a stage of ossification, when new collocations of words become increasingly difficult and the conventional epithet is stereotyped and polarised. In the history

of English style, in prose indirectly as directly in poetry, that stage of ossification was arrested by Tennyson. He is the great Master of the Epithet in our language. He revived old words like 'marish,' he invented new ones like 'Æonian.' He seems to have taken infinite care over the filing of his phrases. A careful study of the *variae lectiones* of his successive editions is a liberal education in poetic form, and there was probably much greater modification before anything of his appeared in print at all. The earlier edition of the celebrated *Charge of the Light Brigade* is of great interest in this connection.

It is for this reason that the poet with whom he is to be affiliated in the history of English poetry, regarded simply as an art, is, of all poets in the world, Pope. It was Pope's aim, he himself avowed, to make English poetry correct in form. It was Tennyson's function to bring back to English verse that care for form which had disappeared from it when he began to write. During his formative period, the titular head of English poetry was Robert Southey, who published amorphous masses which he called poems, while Wordsworth was acting up to a theory of poetry which implied that form was of no consequence. Tennyson rescued English poetry from these tendencies. No wonder that his influence has been the

dominant one among all but a few. As in the eighteenth century every poetaster aped Pope, so in the nineteenth every English minor poet has followed in the wake of Tennyson.

There can be little doubt that this loving care for form was due to his University education on the old Trinity lines. Tennyson is of the classical order of poets in a double sense. There are always poets learned in their art who love to reproduce and recall the best work of their predecessors in their own or in the classical languages: Milton and Gray are of this class. There are poets, again, who preserve in their lines the reserve, the dignity, the *καίρὸς* of the great poets of antiquity, even though they may not be intimately acquainted with them: Collins and Keats are classical in this sense. Tennyson was classical in both ways: he has antique reserve, he is full of reminiscences. It is this fact that has made the comparison to Virgil or to Theocritus so natural, yet so misleading. The reference to Theocritus might pass for one side of his work, and that the least important. But Tennyson had no such theme as the *Majestas Romae* of the great Mantuan before him: no national-religious sanction to his subject, no haunting sense of a world-theme in his words.

There is, indeed, in Tennyson's first period,

which we are at present considering, no haunting sense of anything. There is none of the magic, the mystical charm of Coleridge or of Rossetti in his lines. They are as clear cut as crystal, and as cold. One feels no rush of impetuous emotion behind the words, no uncontrollable outburst of imaginative force. Yet it is this that gives us the sense of a great poet, a vision of unknown vistas of the poet-soul flashing through the verse. Tennyson in his first period knows exactly what he wants to say, and says it in the best way. This is the side of him that has made him popular, and contrasts so favourably with the obscurity and incoherence of many of his compeers. Yet it has its weakness in the want of depth, want of soul-tone in his earlier work.

Akin to this clear-cut form was the accuracy and minuteness of observation which made him so successful a painter of domesticated Nature. His achievements in this direction may have been over-estimated. He is not immaculate; the songster nightingale is always with him, the female, not the male, as it is in Nature: he was probably misled by the myth of Philomela. But the minuteness and independence of his powers of observation are acknowledged on all hands, and go naturally with the clear vision of the artist in words. Yet here again the result is to impair the true

poetic effect, except of course in the purely landscape poems, where this power gave him an advantage over every predecessor in that *genre* of poetry. Nature in romantic or passionate poetry must be used as a 'pathetic fallacy'—to use Mr. Ruskin's phrase—in order to give the *Stimmung* to the emotions the poet wishes to arouse. Minute attention to detail diverts the emotion, and at best produces only a decorative effect.

The danger was that this mastery of form and clearness of vision would lead to mere daintiness, might even result in the sugared elegance of *vers de société*. Tennyson was saved from this by the great chastening sorrow of his life. While he was training himself as a poetic artist with metrical experiments and coinages of five-word phrases enshrining his observations of Nature, he was also elaborating his masterpiece, *In Memoriam*. For twice the Horatian period he kept this series of poem-sequences by him, adding, revising, inserting, and rejecting, till the whole grew to a moving series of pictures of a soul's development, from the first overwhelming stroke till the final reconciliation of sorrow and hope. Injustice is done to Tennyson in thinking of the *In Memoriam* as one outburst written in somewhat cold blood immediately after Hallam's death. He is careful to mark the stages of his grief.

In one case we can even date a canto at least thirteen years later than the death of Arthur Hallam. When the poet speaks of science charming her secret from the latest moon, there is little doubt he is referring to the discovery of Neptune in 1846; yet this occurs in one of the earlier sections of the poem. The dangers involved in a philosophical poem were overcome by putting the problem in a concrete shape. The theology of the poem was from Rugby: it is the voice of the Broad Church clear, yet somewhat thin, and wanting in the higher imagination. The curious anticipations of Darwinism which occur so frequently in it were due to the interest excited by Chambers's *Vestiges of the Natural History of Creation*, which appeared in 1844, and enable us to see how late these sections of the poem were added. The felicities of phrase with which it abounds cause it to rank as one of the best known poems in the language, and the one with which the name of Tennyson will be indissolubly connected. Here, again, the comparison with Pope is justified. The only other long philosophical poem in the language of any real literary merit is his *Essay on Man*.

Maud is even a greater surprise when compared with the Tennyson of the first period. There is no lack here of impetuous emotion, no cold decorative work. There is even a

touch of hysteria in the highly wrought passion. The poet, under Carlyle's influence, broke here with *Manchesterthum*: the sword is the voice of God, as a later poet has put it. There was in *Maud* an indication of emotional power, as in *In Memoriam* there was an unexpected proof of intellectual power, in one who had hitherto seemed only the idle singer of an empty day. To the poet of *In Memoriam* and of *Maud* there seemed no height too high, no poetic exploit too ambitious.

Unhappily, the poet's ambition turned for nearly a quarter of a century into spheres of poetic art where his powers, great as they were, were inadequate. He was not an epic poet, he was not a dramatic poet; yet he devoted his forces at their highest capacity to epic, to drama. An epic is the presentation of a national myth regarded as sacred: the *Paradise Lost* answers to this description, the *Idylls of the King* do not. Arthur has never been a national hero: he is mainly the outcome of a long series of literary creation; the *Idylls* could at best claim only to be a literary epic, not a national one. But the temper required for the literary epic is the romantic, not the classical spirit. There must be something of the Viking delight in battle, a tone of *χάρμη*, not to mention a certain sensuous glory, surrounding the passion of the epic.

Such ideals are different from the Rugby ones, which Tennyson represents in literature. Attempts have been made to defend the *Idylls* from the lack of epic interest by claiming them as an allegory of the struggle of man's soul through life. But the defence is really a verdict against the poet. The medium that carries the allegory must be of interest on its own account, as in the *Faerie Queene*, *Pilgrim's Progress*, *Faust*, or *Dr. Jekyll*, or else where is the advantage of the allegorical mode of treatment?

It is scarcely denied that Tennyson transformed the tone of his originals, of the *Mabinogion* and the *Morte d'Arthur*. The unworthy gibe that the *Morte d'Arthur* of Tennyson was a *Morte d'Albert* was the more unfair, as the *Morte d'Arthur* is the least unsuccessful of the series, and departs least from the original. But the whole conception of Guinevere, and still more of Vivien, was that of the nineteenth-century English gentleman, and something in the spirit of Mr. Podsnap. The control of passion, which is so characteristic a part of the Rugby ideal, has its noble side, but it has a narrowing effect on the artist when dealing with passionate subjects. Along with it goes a want of humour, conspicuous alike in Tennyson and in Wordsworth. The *Northern Farmer* is almost the sole exception

to the high seriousness of his work. The isolation of the poet must have contributed to this defect: one cannot keep one's-self in cotton wool with impunity.

The epic period, 1860-1872, was succeeded by a dramatic decade even more damaging for his reputation. It is not merely that the dramas were unsuited for the stage; their fatal defect was that they were not dramatic. There is more dramatic force, for example, in the closing lines of *Lucretius* than in the whole of the dramas put together. It is useless to note that the character of Henry II., or of Mary, is according to the Records: dramas are not histories. Tennyson may have conceived his characters aright according to Stubbs or to Froude; he has not presented them dramatically. Here, again, as in the epic series, one felt the absence of the creative rush, the sense of a personality behind the artistic work, and greater than it. The great poet is himself greater than his work; the sense of easy mastery of their materials is given by men like Shakespeare or Homer. Tennyson's epic and dramatic studies leave a sense of the poet's struggle with an uncongenial task. Even the poet's mastery of form had declined. There are indeed many passages in the *Idylls of the King*, especially in *The Passing of Arthur* and the *Guinevere*, which, by their

mere verbal beauty, redeem the poems from insignificance. There are scarcely any in the dramas—apart from the lyrical interludes—which are either worthy of their setting or worthy of being taken out of their setting.

I can well remember the disastrous effect the epic and dramatic periods had on Tennyson's reputation during the 'seventies.' We that were interested in the future of English letters had lost all hope in Tennyson: our eyes were turned to Rossetti and Mr. Swinburne. It became the fashion to think and speak slightingly of the great master, who was all the while maturing to a final creative outburst which was to raise him far above any contemporary, far above most of his predecessors in English song, except the two greatest names of all. The fifth act of the drama of Tennyson's poetic career fulfils all, and more than all, the promise of the earlier ones.

Since Sophocles there has been nothing in all literature like that St. Martin's summer of Tennyson's muse. The old age of Goethe, which seems at first sight a parallel, was devoted to science; the vital portions of the second part of *Faust* were written years before they were published. The vigour and virility of the volume of *Ballads*, the *Teiresias* volume, the *New Locksley Hall*, and the *Demeter* volume were astounding: *Rizpah*, *Vastness*, the *Ballad*

of the *Revenge*, *Teiresias*, to mention some of the more striking, were achievements of the first order in poetic force. There was no want of the rush of inspiration behind the verse; there was rugged vigour, sublime incoherence. The metrical forms could no longer bear the fulness of the poetic fervour. There was no over-niceness of precision; even the metre had grown less smooth, more Michalangelesque. It was as if the frost of eld was sending spikes of ice across the surface of the stream of verse. Thus, in the *Crossing of the Bar*, which was so mercilessly reiterated immediately after the poet's death, the third line of each stanza is wanting in the old smoothness and ring; yet it is the more effective for that. The rhythm is more complex, the harmony richer. This was the more needed, as Tennyson was never very rich in rhymes, the other expedient for giving mellowness to English verse. It was perhaps from a sense of this defect that he resorted so frequently and with such effect to alliteration.

It is in the Tennyson of these later days that we recognise the Master—the great poet-soul looming behind the poem, and greater than it. He rises at times to an almost prophetic strain. He had always been English of the English; if this had given him some narrowness of vision and sympathy, it gave

him in later years the intensity which seems impossible without some narrowness. He had revived for us the half-forgotten sentiment of patriotism. Even throughout the pseudo-cosmopolitanism of the Manchester period of recent history he was always for England first. 'Love thou thy land!' was his refrain throughout, and he set the example himself. He has been the one Laureate that was really the nation's voice. If his utterances as Laureate—except perhaps the Wellington Ode—do not take a foremost place among his compositions, that is simply because the English nation during his laureateship has been happy in having no dramatic episodes in its history. You cannot be strikingly effective in dealing with a slow and unconscious development.

It cannot be said of Tennyson that he has been a great spiritual force in the national development of the last half-century. *The Princess* may have aided the movement for the higher education of women, though it is in essence a protest against it. *In Memoriam* has liberalised theology, and been to the Broad Church movement what *The Christian Year* has been to the High Church. But where is the Broad Church now? Tennyson was, on the whole, adverse to evolution, which has been almost an instinct in English speculation for the last quarter of a century. So far as he

was the voice of his age in speculative matters, he only represented the thought of the 'sixties.' *Maud* may have helped to free England from the shackles of *Manchesterthum*. His later incursions into polemics, *In the Children's Hospital* and the unfortunate *Promise of May*, were best forgotten. Direct didacticism is likely at all times to lead to priggishness. The teaching of the true poet is indirect—a sort of induction of the poetic temper and attitude, far more subtle and penetrating in its effects than all your direct teaching. The pictures of still and cleanly English life in the earlier idylls, of sturdy heroism in the ballads, even the somewhat namby-pamby chivalry of the epical *Idylls*—these were the teachings of Tennyson, so far as he was a teacher. It is noteworthy that, in almost all these aspects, he was carrying on the tradition of his predecessor on the poetic throne.

There were so many Tennysons that one would never have done in attempting to deal with all sides of his multifarious poetic activity. But throughout the five acts of his poetic life there is one common element that binds them into an organic unity. His lyrics were as sweet last as first. They run through and connect together, like a string of pearls, all his poetic phases, even his bronze and iron periods. They give unity to *The Princess*; they relieve

the heaviness of the dramas. Dainty and exquisite in form, they have, besides that haunting charm, that imaginative atmosphere which is too often wanting in Tennyson's other work. Their melody is almost unsurpassed in our language, and they have received the homage of musicians in frequent settings. Yet I remember George Eliot saying to me, that, exquisite as they are, they are seldom suitable for singing, especially when compared with the Elizabethan lyrics which trill forth as naturally as from a bird. The collocations of consonants in Tennyson's lyrics often impede voice production. It is easy to explain the difference. The Elizabethans were writing for a nation of singers; Tennyson was writing for a people with whom singing is a lost art.

It was his lyrics that made him the popular poet he undoubtedly was. He was emphatically, for the Victorian era, the man that sang the nation's songs. If these were at times wanting in the finer harmonies and the more complex rhythms, that was no bar to their popularity—it was rather a condition of it. The critical problem of Tennyson's art, we have been told, is his simultaneous acceptance by mob and by dilettanti. The solution of the problem is a tolerably obvious one: he appealed to these different classes with different phases of his art. He could use the simplicity,

even the banality, of Longfellow, and he could also wield the wand of Coleridge, or of Rossetti. There were so many Tennysons.

Of Tennyson the man the public know nothing; it was his dignified wish to live his life apart. The glimpses we catch of him reveal something akin to his own bluff English squires, tempered by even more than the usual share of poetic sensitiveness. This aloofness need only be here considered in reference to its consequences on his art. This cannot but have suffered from want of contact with the larger life, which made him impossible as a dramatist. But it prepared the way for the Seerhood of the closing period, and, above all, enabled him to live his life solely devoted to his glorious art.

No English poet impresses one with such a sense of continuous improvement in the *technique* of his vocation. At first the echoes resound: a phrase of Keats, a sentiment of Wordsworth, a rhythm of Byron, a lilt of Shelley or of Coleridge, experiments in metrical quantity—everywhere we find the poet testing all things poetical, and holding fast that which was good. Soon the individual accent comes, in the *Palace of Art*, in the *Lotus Eaters*, in *The Epic*, and the music strengthens and deepens till the last. No English poet but Milton shows so steady an

advance in his art from the beginning of his career till its close. Nor has Milton the same wide command of all the keys. Tennyson is undoubtedly the greatest poetic artist of England, and he will thus remain at once the people's poet and the poets' poet of these isles.

It is no world-poet that England now is mourning with commingled pride and grief. No world-pain throbs through his lines. No world-problem finds in him expression or solution. The sweet domesticities, the manly and refined ideals of English life in the middle period of the nineteenth century—Tennyson was the fluted voice of these. To these he has given immortality while he has gained immortality from them. For us he has helped to express the English ideals which are destined to be an abiding influence in the national life. He spoke not to the world at large: he spoke only to his beloved England. He was, and is, our own Tennyson.

ROBERT LOUIS STEVENSON

December 3, 1894

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THE most striking individuality in English letters of to-day has gone from us. The loss is the greater since one of the peculiar notes of his genius was its versatility and unexpectedness. You could never guess what Stevenson's next book was going to be about. It might be a footnote to history, a familiar study of men or of books, a mediæval romance, a new Arabian night, a talk about talking, a tale of Thule or a ballad of the South Seas, a nursery rhyme or a sympathetic study of old men. What might he not have given us if his years had stretched to the Psalmist's span?

But amid all the diversity of his work there was one common strain which made it all his and gave the individual note. Jeffrey wondered where Macaulay got that style of his; Stevenson has told us how he created the prose instrument which has done more than anything to break up the Macaulayesque

influence. He played the 'sedulous ape,' as he himself phrased it, to Mr. Ruskin, to Hazlitt, to Sir Thomas Browne, to all the great ones of the past. It has been suggested that in his style he owed more to a master of the present than to any of the past grand masters. There are who give to Mr. George Meredith the rights of paternity to Stevenson's style. And, indeed, in their search for the unexpected adjective, in their use of the metaphoric verb, in their appeal to the *sous-entendu*, both masters have a common method. Yet the younger man has surpassed his model in lucidity, in grace, in restraint of his eccentricities, with the result that for ease there has been nothing like Stevenson's style since Lamb, while for vivacity and vividness there is nothing like it elsewhere in English prose. The richer rhythms he perhaps lacks, and his tone has possibly at times a touch of affectation. But no more subtle instrument of human thought has ever been wielded more gracefully outside the shores of France. No wonder that its influence has spread far and wide, till even the suburban journalist writes with something like ease.

But it was something more than that edulous imitation that gave Stevenson's style its *cachet*. The style is the habiliment of the spirit. At first sight it might seem that

Stevenson was as much the sedulous ape in the spirit of his work as he had been in the style of it. Here we see Edgar Allan Poe, there Alexandre Dumas; here Walt Whitman, and there Walter Scott; Hazlitt here, and there Laurence Sterne. Yet what is this but to say that he was of the classic tradition and carried it on in all branches of his work? And in all his superiority of style put him on the level even of the great masters he was copying. If he could not equal Poe's command of the eerie and fantastic, Dumas's grouping and broad canvas, Scott's humour and geniality and multifarious life, he could clothe what he took from each in drapery more closely fitting than any they had in their wardrobe. His very choice of models was significant, and the Romantic Revival in the English novel of to-day had in him its leader.

But for one side of his activity he had to go back to no other original than himself. He first found himself in his characteristic studies of men young and old, and revealed in his treatment of them a philosophy of life that was all his own. Stevenson was the first of the younger voices who spoke out the thoughts of men who faced life without the support of the older traditions. He was the laureate of the joy of life, of the life here and now. He courted Life like the gallant that he was what

time he himself was walking hand in hand with Death. That joyous acceptance of life as it is was the predominant note of Stevenson, and was the chief artistic lesson he has left to his age.

Herein Stevenson came in line with the French school of literary critics of life. They have been untrammelled by the older traditions, they have faced life in all its aspects bravely and gallantly, they have been curious in their wordcraft, yet in this last, if in nought else, they carried on the older traditions. Only in one thing did Stevenson part company with them. One of the aspects of life which the French faced most boldly and unflinchingly is the fact of sex. Stevenson shrank from this consciously and avowedly. He clung to the cleanly tradition of restraint and self-respect in this regard, and except for some slight sketches in *Prince Otto*, woman is absent from his pages. The fact is characteristic of the two civilisations.

It was this gay, gallant, fresh philosophy of life that lent their chief charm to his first efforts, *An Inland Voyage* and *Travels with a Donkey*. He moralised every step of the way. Not a character appears that is not ethically valued in the scheme of life—this one for his courtesy, that for his silence, another for his courage, she for gaiety, he for his grumpiness

—all are judged ethically as well as artistically. Yet Stevenson was singularly deficient in capacity for catching characteristic traits of physiognomy. He rarely, if ever, pictures men by his pen. He cannot give a character by a trick of gesture as Dickens could, and did.

Still more was this philosophy of his predominant and pervading in his critical studies. Whether he was judging Burns or Villon, old admirals or young men, a lover, a soldier, or a poet, the appeal was to an ideal of character which Stevenson had formed for himself straight from the facts of life, or perhaps one should say straight from the facts of Scottish life. Although he may have thrown over the older creeds, they formed at least the frame to his picture of life. He was Scot of the Scots in his judgment of things, and we might almost forgive Calvinism for the misery it has caused in the world if only because it formed, as it were, the sash to the window from which Stevenson looked out into the world.

It is this Calvinistic framework, hard but clear, which imparted such effectiveness to the booklet by which he most impressed the world. *Dr. Jekyll* became a classic from the day it was published. It stands beside *The Pilgrim's Progress* and *Gulliver's Travels* as one of the three great allegories in English. The

idea had occupied Stevenson for long: it had been utilised in the drama of *Deacon Brodie*, and is referred to at the end of *An Inland Voyage*. Its artistic economy is almost perfect; every word tells. In the background looms one aspect of the great problem of sex which Stevenson elsewhere evaded or avoided. But the facing of the facts of life is straightforward and sincere. Mr. Hyde is as much part of the composite nature as is Dr. Jekyll.

It is curious that his other great popular success should have been made with a book of an entirely opposite character, as objective as the other was psychopathic, as open and straightforward as the other was weird and mystic. *Treasure Island* struck, if not a new note, a disused one in English fiction. He founded, or at least refounded, the *plein air* school. The moment was ripe and the man had come. The world was getting tired of analysis and introspection. It had had enough of looking on at painful paturitions of society nothings. Yet our gratitude to Stevenson need not be the less because he appeared when he was wanted. In literature, above all things, the master is paramount. There are always a number of facile pens that can write ditto to Mr. Burke. If Stevenson had chosen to develop the more morbid side of his genius, the world might have been flooded with

morbidity. He took us out into the open air and made us care for the common life and adventures of men. If young gentlemen nowadays find it more profitable to write second-rate imitations of Dumas than to become Cabinet ministers, they owe it to Stevenson; but for him they might have been Howells and James young men.

Of *Treasure Island* itself one finds it difficult to speak the unexaggerated word. That the subject itself and many of its details were reminiscential with Stevenson matters not. It is the unique fusion of incident and character interest that makes the book so remarkable. It is action, action, action, from the first sentence to the last. Yet every one who plays his part in the action is as deeply characterised as if he were the centre of an introspective novel. It is not alone the sea cook himself; there is not a single person whose name is given in the book whose character we do not know almost as well, if not as thoroughly, as that versatile villain. From Billy Jones to George Merry they are characterised with a firmness of touch and certainty of vision equal to Phil May's.

Much the same may be said of *Kidnapped*. But though the plot lacks the epic unity of the other, yet the characterisation here touches profounder depths. Stevenson was

breathing his native air—he could create, and not merely construct character. After all, your buccaneer does not pay for mining deep into his character. Stevenson had struck it rich when he had to deal with Alan Breck, poet and spy, deserter and rebel, brave and a braggart. Those who know the printed report of the trial of James Stuart will recognise what scanty material Stevenson had for his creation both in *Kidnapped* and its sequel *Catriona*. This latter failed just because he gave us too much of the trial. It is, indeed, curious that in both books fascination only begins when we cross the Highland line, either locally or spiritually. The Lowlander, with his canny caution, cannot stir our blood. It is one of Stevenson's triumphs to have kept consistently cool the tone of the narrator, the Lowland David Balfour, amidst all the feuds of the Gael.

A similar triumph was achieved when Stevenson put in the mouth of a dominie the strange tale of a fraternal feud told in *The Master of Ballantrae*. The Master himself is over-elaborated, and the whole book is too episodical and not closely enough knit together. Yet there are touches that cut us deep, and there are scenes that stand out as clear as anything in Stevenson. The duel by candlelight, the Master's farewell to his home,

the two brothers at the tailor's shop, are as vivid as anything he did, but the connection of the book is not organic.

I have now commented upon all of Stevenson's work in fiction that is of really first-class rank. The Suicide Club in the *New Arabian Nights* may go to join the others. But the rest is only fantastic trifling which leaves but slight impress on the memory. Almost the same might be said of the *Merry Men* volume, but the tales there touch deeper notes. In *Markheim* a higher level is reached—it wanted little more to have been a second *Jekyll*. Thrifty as Stevenson was as a creative artist, wasting never a word or an incident, he yet required a largish canvas before he could produce his full effect. It must ever be so with the masters of characterisation; the *conte* is not for them.

In thinking over Stevenson's work one is apt to overlook *Prince Otto*. It is of so different a *genre*, it has almost a note of insincerity. Yet that very note is cognate with its subject, and in its rococo manner it is a perfect bit of novelistic *bric-à-brac*, a sort of romance in Dresden china. There is one chapter, however, that redeems it. The flight of the princess through the woods in the night is one of the most perfect things Stevenson ever wrote. It is characteristic that it should come

with the plunge from courtly artificialities into the open air and Nature unadorned. The character drawing is as firm as elsewhere. The Miller, the Scotch Colonel, the English Traveller, the demirep Countess, the sensualist Conspirator, all these bite the steel with clean-cut lines. Yes, *Prince Otto* is the Stevensonian crux; like not that and you are no true Stevensonian.

Of his more recent excursions in company with Mr. Lloyd Osbourne there is little need to speak—he could not ride tandem. Touches there are in *The Wrecker* and the rest which recall the unadulterate Stevenson, but they are few and far between. Those books should form no part of his luggage on his journey to the House of Fame.

Nor will he carry with him up the hill his volumes of verse, attractive though they be in many respects. But their attraction lies not in themselves, but rather in the fact that Stevenson wrote them. That applies even to the *Child's Book of Verses*, unique as it is. If we contrast it with the *Songs of Innocence*, we see how Stevenson has failed to transmute verse into poetry. He was emphatically a speaker, not a singer.

All his qualities coalesced when he came to deal with his own life as a young man in the *Memories and Portraits*, and with the life of

all young men in the *Virginibus Puerisque*. The light touch, the full feeling, the deep thought, the gay and gallant aspect, make the books as bright as youth itself. He could creep into a child's mind; but the thoughts and feelings of these books were those of a man who was ever young at heart, and so they are fitted to be for ever the *vade-mecum* of the young man. Who has entered into the motives for a young man's laziness like Stevenson? Who has expressed so well the haunting sense of inutility which besets almost all men on entering life? Yet how playfully and how cheeringly he diagnoses the nostalgia!

These bright books, full of the most ebullient life, were written by a man gazing steadfastly into the eyes of Death. Perhaps it was the insistent need for getting rid of morbid thoughts that led Stevenson to dwell on the active life in the open air. But what a dauntless courage that could disregard the perpetual menace of his grisly visitant and play so well the part of the young man into whose calculations Death enters not! His were indeed brave words, and their courage is an inspiration.

SIR JOHN R. SEELEY

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SEELEY was essentially a Cambridge mind. Lucidity, sound judgment, accurate knowledge, wide outlook, were his. But there was an absence of *élan*, an avoidance of the personal note, a refusal to appeal to the emotions or to be moved by them, which left his readers cold. He could convince, but not charm. His light, to use the expression of another great Cambridge man, was a dry one. It has been said that Cambridge produces great men, Oxford great movements, or, as another variant puts it, 'Cambridge breeds men; Oxford, Oxford men.' In other words, the great ones of Cambridge have not that personal charm which leads to widespread influence, taking the form of 'movements.' Seeley strikes one as having more intellectual calibre than either Jowett or Pater, yet he has left nothing like the stamp of a similar influence on Cambridge to that wielded at the other university by either of the latter names.

Seeley as an historical writer had no charm ; as a Cambridge man might put it, he could not gush. I should digress too much if I discussed how far this was due to the influence of the Cambridge $\eta\theta\omicron\varsigma$. Perhaps I may summarise by saying that we of Cambridge woo Truth, not Art, forgetful that the highest truth can only be expressed by art. Be this as it may, the fact remains that Seeley failed to reach the highest, because of the absence of that personal appeal which charms us in many Oxford men of much inferior gifts.

Yet withal what an achievement was his in the realm of pure intellect ! Putting aside for a moment his theological ‘excursions and alarms,’ consider what he did for the modern history of the three greatest European nations. For Germany he wrote the best life of the creator of modern Germany. If his biography of Stein fails to attract, it is mainly because Stein is not an attractive personality. The best parts of the book are where he is not dealing with Stein at all, but with some great movement of European feeling, like the national protest of Spain. What lends the book, however, an almost epic note, is the *rôle* played by Napoleon as the Satan of the action. This he also treated separately in his monograph on the great *condottiere*, as he regarded him. This was an artful book, in more senses than one.

It might be described as a brief for the Devil's advocate. From the choice of a frontispiece to the last page, nothing is left undone to depreciate the man and his work. He declared that his plan precluded him from dealing at length with Napoleon's campaigns, and by this artifice was enabled to leave out of account that side of his activity to which he could not have denied greatness. One cannot help thinking that a survival of the old English feeling against 'Boney' animated his pen, and gave the work a personal tone somewhat lacking elsewhere. Yet he gave for France in it a clearer account, in shorter compass, of the rise of her modern institutions than is to be found elsewhere.

Original as was his work on modern Germany and France, it was little less than epoch-making on modern England. By the earlier historians England was mainly regarded as a majestic mother of Parliaments. Seeley felt that from this point of view the interest of English history ceased with Macaulay's period, the English Revolution. He set himself to show that after this period England had taken up a far greater, a world-important task. He proved to conviction that the eighteenth century was for history memorable, as containing the conflict of England and France for world-empire. It was in vain that Mr. Morley attempted to prove that

Carlyle, by his perpetual insistence, in the *Frederick*, on Jenkins's ears, had anticipated Seeley in giving due importance to the expansion of England. We felt that Seeley had succeeded in what he had set out to do, in giving an epic unity to the last two centuries of English history. Surely since Sieyès no pamphlet—for it was little more in point of size—ever had such immediate and wide-reaching influence. Our Imperialism of to-day is the combined work of Beaconsfield and of Seeley, a curious couple of collaborators. Seeley's K.C.M.G. was a fit reward for services done to the empire.

Seeley's work as historian and as teacher of history at Cambridge was diplomatic in a double sense. He aimed at giving a more definite conception to the meaning of history by confining it to the study of the State and its development. Your development of literature and science, your *Culturgeschichte*, your social position of the people, were not for him as historian. Unless they got into State documents they had nothing to do with history as he conceived it, following in this the school of Ranke. For his period, and for his purposes, the documents that were of chief interest and importance were those of the diplomatists. It is to be hoped that sufficient remains of the work on which he was engaged during the past few

years to give him his due rank as the historian of England's foreign policy.

Of Seeley's work at his post in Cambridge I know but little. The Historical Tripos was his creation, but it has yet to win its spurs. I attended one of his professorial courses, and went to one or two of his 'Friday evenings,' at which Seeley played the *rôle* of Socrates. His lectures were clear, but cold; there was an air of the higher mathematics about them, congenial to the spot, perhaps, but hardly fascinating. There was a curious resemblance to Renan in his appearance, but Seeley had none of Renan's wit, still less had he any of Renan's *diablerie*. Yet both men, as is well known, gained their greatest success by their treatment of the life of Jesus.

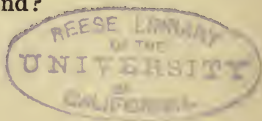
Ecce Homo was, above all, an historian's conception of Jesus. In fact, it was Seeley's answer to Gibbon's problem in the celebrated fifteenth chapter. Gibbon wished to explain the remarkable spread and success of the early Church; Seeley tried to trace it back to the personal influence of the Founder. In doing this he had naturally to lay stress on Jesus's personal influence as man upon men, and thereby raised the ire of the Evangelicals. Curiously enough, it was on the historical side of his work that Seeley was most wanting. He failed to show from the Gospel records

that the conscious aim of Jesus's life was the formation of a Society of Humanity. He could find no text for his refrain 'L'Église, c'est moi.' Yet his insistence on the social side of Jesus's work has done more for Christian union than any theological utterance of the past third of a century. Here, at any rate, is common ground.

He attempted a similar eirenicon in his *Natural Religion*, with reference to the conflict between religion and science. Religion is the pursuit of the ideal in any sphere, was his teaching. Thus science and art are both religious in tendency, if not in aim. How far the book served its purpose it is difficult to say. Science and religion are no longer at loggerheads, but that result, I fancy, has been produced rather by a process of exhaustion than by any direct influence of Seeley's. Yet *Natural Religion* was fully as original as *Ecce Homo*, and was much more attractive in style.

Not much need be said about Seeley's incursions into literary criticism. His contributions to *English Lessons*, so far as we can trace them, are lucid, but wanting in imaginative insight. Milton he treated rather as an historian than a critic. His little book on Goethe is somewhat commonplace, and fails to do justice to the Titanic side of the poet.

Seeley's light was a dry one, I have said, but it was pure and steady, and illumined every branch of thought on which he turned it. There are those who prefer this species of illumination to the more iridescent glare and more fantastic shadows cast by the *feu follet* of imagination. Truth has its triumphs no less than Fancy, and of these were Seeley's. The votaries of Veracity need, above all things, restraint and repression; Imagination must be their servant, not their master. Throughout Seeley's work, so original in so many directions, one feels that he never brought out all that was in him. Of Gray—another Cambridge man, and Seeley's predecessor in his chair—it was said that he never spoke out. May we not say of Seeley that he never let himself go? Yet in this restraint and repression Seeley was English of the English. I have called his a Cambridge mind. Should I not supplement this by saying that the Cambridge mind, in all its strength, with all its limitations, is the characteristic English mind?



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